Reports from the Department of Philosophy
Vol. 29

SPINOZA'S CONCEPT OF EMENDING THE INTELLECT

A CRITICAL INVESTIGATION INTO SPINOZA'S METHOD OF EMENDING THE INTELLECT WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE *TRACTATUS DE INTELLECTUS EMENDATIONE*

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ISSN 1457-9332
ISBN 978-951-29-5841-2 (paperback)
ISBN 978-951-29-5842-9 (PDF)

Painosalama Oy, Turku 2014

Acknowledgements

My heartfelt thanks, firstly, goes to the University of Turku for giving me the opportunity and support to accomplish this important project in my life. I express a deep gratitude to the Department of Philosophy and, most of all, to Professor Olli Koistinen for his kind invitation to study under his supervision and for his unfailing support and assistance to me as a 'part-time' philosopher. In the same vein, I extend a special word of thanks to Valtteri Viljanen for his supervisory assistance throughout and especially during the crucial finalization stage of this manuscript. I will always have fond memories of the warm Finnish hospitality he and Hanna extended me during this time.

During our stay in Finland (2010–2011), I was especially privileged to be regularly included into the "Rationalist Circle", a circle of top class philosophers, but also one of friends. Thank you all so much for the kind interest in my work and support. A special word of thanks goes also to Hemmo Laiho for his assistance in preparing the manuscript for publication and also to Hanna-Mari Salonen for her friendship and assistance throughout.

I would also like to thank Associate Professor Julie Klein (Villanova University) and Dr. Peter Myrdal (University of Uppsala) for acting as external referees and for their valuable comments.

On a personal note, I would like to thank my wife Anne and dedicate this work to her. Without her ongoing encouragement and support the achievement of this life long ambition of mine would not have materialized. I will always cherish the wonderful time we as family spent together in Turku. An especially 'warm' memory for me as a South African was taking our nine year-old son Philip to school by bus when it was minus 25° and watching him learn to ice skate!

Contents

Abbreviations

1. SPINOZA, BENEDICTUS DE (1632–77)

S = Spinoza. 2002. *Spinoza: Complete Works*, Translated by Samuel Shirley, edited by Michael L. Morgan. Indianapolis: Hackett.

CM = *Metaphysical Thoughts* (Cogitata Metaphysica). CM1/2 is part 1, chapter 2.

E = *Ethics* (Ethica). The first arabic number specifies the part of the Ethics. The abbreviations following that numeral are as follows:

ax = axiom
app = appendix
cor = corollary
def = definition
dem = demonstration
lem = lemma
p = proposition
pref = preface
sch = scholium

Ep = *Letters* (Epistolae), followed by arabic numeral.

ST = *Short Treatise on God, Man and His Wellbeing*. ST1/2/3 is part 1, chapter 2, paragraph 3.

TdIE = *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect* (Tractatus de Intellectus Emendatione). TdIE§1 is paragraph 1.

TP = *Political Treatise* (Tractatus Politicus). TP1/2 is chapter 1, paragraph 2.

TTP = *Theological-Political Treatise* (Tractatus Theologico-Politicus). Chapter number is followed by page number.

2. OTHER SOURCES (for further details, see bibliography)

CSM = Descartes, Rene. 1985. *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*. *Volume I*. Translated by J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff and D. Murdoch.

DSPW = Descartes, Rene. 1988. *Descartes Selected Philosophical Writings*. Translated by J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff and D. Murdoch.

EHU = Locke, John. 1997. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Ed. R. Woolhouse.

1. The Quest for Certitude

The focal point of this work is a central feature of early modern[1] thought, described by Stephen Toulmin as the philosophical *quest for certainty*.[2] The latter involves the endeavor to uncover true and certain ideas of our world on which a body of indubitable knowledge can be built. I argue that the response by early seventeenth-century rationalist philosophers, such as Descartes and Spinoza, to this challenge, came in the form of an innovation in their epistemology aimed at acquiring adequate ideas of the inmost *essence* of things.[3] Generally speaking, the early modern notion of essence refers to the metaphysical core of reality, to that which determines what things are and how they act in a most fundamental way. The knowledge of essences is aimed at disclosing the foundational principles or fundamental laws of nature, which are common to all things and the same in all. For example, when Descartes famously considers the essence of a particular body, such as a melting piece of wax, he is eventually left with only the intellectual notion of an extended substance in motion, which he regards as the essence of the wax and as something common to all material things. For Descartes and Spinoza, as I will show, such essences and their ideas are necessarily involved and expressed

[1] Early modern philosophy is an interval in the history of philosophy at the beginning of the period known as modern philosophy. The early modern period in history is roughly 1500-1800, but the label early modern philosophy is sometimes used to refer to a more specific period of time. I use the term to refer mainly to philosophy of the 1600's, posited to have started with Descartes and to include Hobbes, Pascal, Spinoza and Leibniz. Many would stretch this period one generation further and to include Hume, Locke and Berkeley.

[2] In his book *Cosmopolis,* Stephen Toulmin researches the quite notable development in early modern philosophy in which a decisive move, from renaissance humanism to rationalism, took place. He describes this development as a decisive shift in philosophical focus, from the particular to the universal, the local to the general and the timely to the timeless (Toulmin 2009: 30). He argues that the quite radical development that took place in early modern thought is best understood as a reaction to the untenable situation in Europe during the religious and other strife of the early seventeenth century. In his view a new realization dawned that the 'time had come to discover some *rational method* for demonstrating the essential correctness or incorrectness of philosophical, scientific, or theological doctrines … If Europeans were to avoid falling into a skeptical morass, they had, it seemed, to find *something* to be "certain" about' (ibid.: 55). According to Toulmin 'all the protagonists of modern philosophy promoted theory, devalued practice, and insisted equally on the need to find foundations for knowledge that were clear, distinct and certain' (ibid.: 70). In his view Descartes's philosophy played a central role in this development and his discovery of the *single certain thing* (the cogito) that made other certainties possible, was particularly significant.

[3] Bolton (1998: 196) associates scientific knowledge or *scientia* in seventeenth-century philosophy with the theory of essence. For Bolton the notion of the 'essence of a thing is what it is to be that thing, or what is expressed in its definition…' I argue later that in Spinoza an adequate definition aims to capture the simple nature of things, which he regards as their inmost essence.

in all things and can therefore be adequately conceived by the mind. An important further reason for them being optimistic about discovering certitude followed from a new understanding of the human intellect's innate ability to think adequately, by virtue of it possessing clear and distinct ideas of such essences. According to Carriero: 'Like others of his time, Descartes had confidence in the ability of the human mind to fruitfully pursue questions about God, the nature or essence of the mind and the nature or essence of the physical world' (2009: 1).[4]

As suggested, the project of discovering a clear and certain foundation for our knowledge was seen to be of critical importance in alleviating the untenable social situation in Europe in that time. Spinoza, for one, was convinced that it was only incontrovertible knowledge, based on adequate ideas of the essence of things, that could secure an absolute inception point[5] to initiate the improvement and continued progress of human society. The intention was for this new type of knowledge to form an indubitable basis for a new science and also for a new morality, both of which could facilitate a more stable society (Huenemann 2008: 94). For Spinoza, the seemingly endless bitter social conflict, experienced in that time, was incited and flamed by human passions, which followed from an inadequate or imaginative understanding of the world. He strongly believed that in order to reduce human discontent, which contributed much to social unrest, the human *mind* must find acquiescence. I argue that, although Spinoza's approach is distinctly rationalist, his philosophy has an ethical intention and is primarily aimed at producing joy and peace of mind. For Spinoza, such a sense of fulfillment in humans can only be found in the full consent of the mind, which follows from a clear understanding of things:

> For insofar as we understand, we can desire nothing but that which must be, nor, in an absolute sense, can we find contentment in anything but truth. And so insofar as we rightly understand these matters, the endeavor of the better part of us is in harmony with the order of the whole of Nature. (4app S: 362.)

[4] In early modern philosophy such essences or principles are often described in theological terms as *God's* essence or the *divine* nature.

[5] For Huenemann it is a common trait in all modern philosophies that they try to find a way of standing free of circumstantial influences in order to grasp the very nucleus of metaphysical reality (2008: 94)

> For example, a man's true happiness and blessedness consists solely in wisdom and knowledge of truth. (TTP3 S: 416.)

I contend that Spinoza's philosophy is based on a platonic-like distinction between the realms of eternal and temporal being. The former refers to an immanent divine essence, hidden from the senses, but clearly discernible to the intellect and the latter to the durational world of existing particular things, known mostly inadequately by means of our sensory ideas. In Spinoza, the very nature or essence of our existence is the creative and concurring power of God on which all things intimately depend for their essence and existence and without which nothing can be or be conceived. For Spinoza the adequate understanding of the essential difference between these two orders and how they relate to one another leads to a sense of well-being in humans. His project of acquiring certain knowledge must therefore start with the discovery of true ideas of God's eternal and infinite essence, in which true light the essence of all other things can be understood. For Spinoza human happiness originates in the clear understanding of our place and union with the world, i.e. by understanding and consenting that all things are necessarily contained in and follow from God's essence and continually depend on his sustaining power. In Descartes and Spinoza, the basis for this belief was a new appreciation of the human mind's given ability to know this inmost essence of things adequately. I will show that the concept of *essence*, and specifically the notion of *essence monism*, plays an all-important role in Spinoza's task of attaining certain knowledge of our world and in ontologically and conceptually unifying the eternal and temporal orders, referred to above. In my view, Spinoza's *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect* (TdIE), which receives much attention in this work, was written to develop the best *method* of discovering this new kind of knowledge.

1.1. The nature of the human mind

The European Enlightenment, which took place roughly between 1600-1800, is without doubt one of the most important periods in the history of Western civilization and its philosophy. The many diverse aspects of this period have been the subject of much research over the years and there are many theories as to the cause(s) of this great social upheaval that culminated in the French Revolution towards the end of the eighteenth century. The renowned intellectual historian Jonathan Israel[6] reaches an interesting and important conclusion that philosophy (especially early modern) played a decisive role in this whole process of social change that took place:

> But whichever view of the philosophical ferment one adopts, there is no scope for ignoring the universal conviction during the revolutionary age, beginning in the early 1780's, that it was 'philosophy' which had demolished the *ancien regime*, and in particular the ideas, beliefs, and loyalties on which it rested, and that it had accomplished this feat long before the first shots were fired at the Bastille. (Israel 2002: 715.)

Israel adds it to be exceedingly implausible that a 'revolution of fact', which successfully demolished such a powerfully embedded world order, could have taken place without a prior revolution in ideas or 'a revolution of the mind' (ibid.: 714). He concludes that the radical ideas of the new rationalist philosophers, undeniably, helped make the Revolution.

The influential role attributed to philosophy in this period seems to have coincided with some important changes that take took place within philosophy itself, one of which was a general move towards greater independence and self-

[6] Jonathan Israel has recently produced some quite monumental works on the European Enlightenment. The best known of his books is *Radical Enlightenment - Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750*. In this work he convincingly argues for the important role that early modern rationalist philosophy played in laying the intellectual foundation (the revolution in mind) for the revolution in fact which came about in Europe towards the end of the eighteenth century. Of particular interest is the role he attributes to the philosophy of Spinoza in formulating the radical ideas that would later form the basis of the values of a modern democratic society. The important influence of Spinoza's thought is something, according to Israel, that modern historiography has misconstrued and underestimated (Israel 2002: 13).

determination that started to take shape in the early modern period. It is notable that it was at this very time, the 1650's and onwards, that philosophy slowly but increasingly separated itself from various institutions and became more independent. During the Middle-Ages, philosophy was mainly practiced in the arts faculties of the schools and colleges, where ethics, logic, metaphysics, and physics were taught and also in the theological faculties of the universities. The important consequence of this arrangement was that philosophy fell under the direct and censorious scrutiny of the Church. By the seventeenth century, although it was still the case that anyone who wanted to earn a living by doing philosophical thinking and writing had either to belong to a university faculty or to teach in a college, it had become more common to find philosophers working outside the strictures of the university, i.e. the ecclesiastic framework (Nadler 2002: 1). Many of the best-known philosophers of the early modern period, figures such as Bacon, Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Locke and Hume were largely independent scholars. This process in which philosophy became more independent continued and gathered momentum, to the extent that by the end of the eighteenth century it was, by and large, a secular enterprise.[7] This development signaled the start of a remarkable change in the character and role of philosophy. In prior times, actually since the advent of the Christian empire in late antiquity, from the time of Constantine until the 1650's, philosophy was no more than the modest *handmaiden* of theology (Israel 2002: 10). It was only in early modern times, with the revolutionary work of philosophers such as Descartes, Spinoza and others, that the old hierarchy of studies, in which theology reigned supreme - with science and philosophy as its serving maids -started to disintegrate quite rapidly. With this development philosophy was increasingly released from its previous subordination and became an independent force potentially at odds with received thinking, theology and the Church.[8]

[7] This is not to suggest a radical discontinuity between early modern thought and what went before. These new philosophers did indeed see themselves to be initiating a renewal of philosophy, but it is apparent that much of their philosophy was indebted to both the structure and content of their scholastic predecessors (Nadler 2002: 2).

[8] An interesting example of such a controversy between theology and philosophy took place at the Dutch University of Leiden in the time in which Spinoza probably undertook some part time studies there. The main point of contention was that the philosophy of Descartes was seen by certain authoritative reformed theologians (Voetius) to be encroaching on the areas of theology.

One of best examples of this development in philosophy towards self-determination is found in the many enquiries that were undertaken by philosophers in this time into the nature of human understanding. It is quite remarkable, that in a period of about 150 years (1620-1770), the two main philosophical approaches of the time, the rationalist and the empiricist, both undertook numerous enquiries into the nature of the human mind. On the rationalist side, for example, we find Descartes's *Rules for the Direction of the Mind* (the *Regulae*), Spinoza's *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect* and Leibniz's *New Essay on Human Understanding*. From the empiricist camp in this time we have Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Hume's *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* and Berkeley's *A Treatise concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*. The above is a sample of the better-known treatises on this subject, but enough to confirm, that one of the main subjects of philosophical attention in early modern philosophy was the nature of the human mind. The important point I make is that the seemingly strong desire amongst early modern thinkers for philosophy to become more self-determined was closely associated with a new understanding of the nature of the human mind. I argue that it was mainly the early modern rationalists (such as Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz) who promoted the view that the human mind possessed innate ideas of the inmost essences of things. This type of knowledge was seen to be completely different to the universals of the scholastic Aristotelians, which were abstracted from particulars.[9] The rationalists strongly denied that the essences of things could be known through sense perception and experience. In their view it was only the intellect that could know such fundamental essences adequately (Nadler 2006: 176). As suggested earlier, this new optimistic view of the human mind played an important role in securing a foundation for the new science and philosophy to challenge the prevailing and, in

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The result was a ban on the teaching of Cartesianism at that university for a period of time. For more information on this controversy see Verbeek (2002: 167-182) and also Cramer (1889: 156-176) who represents a rather different perspective. Cramer defends the Cartesian Dutch Reformed philosopher/theologian, Abraham Heidanus (1597-1678) against the above accusations. He describes the work of Heidanus as truly Cartesian and very different to the philosophy of Spinoza, which, in his view, did indeed trespass onto the domain of theology and the Church. It is notable in the view of Cramer that the philosophy of Spinoza is seen to be a direct onslaught on the foundations of Church authority and divine revelation, whereas the work of Descartes was seen to still serve the interests of Christian theology and the Church.

[9] For a discussion of this subject see Carriero (2009: 1-21).

their opinion, outdated world-view of Aristotelian-scholastic philosophers, theologians and the Church. The latter, of course, still adhered to the view of the human mind as corrupt and unable to have certainty about its own ideas, due to the fall of mankind into sin. I argue that Spinoza's TdIE is best understood as partaking in and contributing to the endeavor of early-modern philosophy to clarify human understanding and to further a rationalist conception of its nature.

1.2. *Medicina mentis*

Although the early-modern philosophical landscape was quite diverse, I think it legitimate to distinguish two main lines of thought found in this time, i.e. the *rationalist* and the *empiricist* approaches to philosophy. It is important in understanding Spinoza's concept of emending the intellect, to grasp the basic difference in approach and method between these two important early-modern intellectual currents. I think it essential to briefly compare the basic approach and methods employed in early-modern rationalism and empiricism. However, although there are important basic differences between them, there are also some important common intentions that these philosophical styles shared, which I will discuss first.

Although the earlier Reformation had brought about a deep split in western Christendom and brought about diverse confessional spheres (Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran and Calvinist) in societies in Europe, it still remained a civilization in which the essentials of Christianity was unchallenged and still served as the basic life and world-view in the seventeenth century. Furthermore, despite some deep-seated differences amongst the above-mentioned confessions, there was however, largely an agreement that Aristotelian-scholasticism offered the best general metaphysical and scientific underpinning for their different theologies (Israel 2002:16). Although Aristotelian-scholasticism was by no means uniform[10], it was the sanctioned philosophy that prevailed in universities throughout Europe and strongly influenced philosophical and scientific text-books (Nadler 2002: 21). As

[10] For a good overview of the status of Aristotelianism in early modern philosophy, see Stone (2002: 7-24).

suggested, there was also a strong dawning desire to change this, among most early modern philosophers.[11]

The single ingredient of the Aristotelian philosophical heritage that most early modern thinkers were, arguably, eager to replace was the celebrated theory of substantial forms (Della Rocca 2002: 64). According to this theory all things basically consist of matter and form. While matter was regarded as inert, form was thought to be an active principle, consisting of certain powers that flowed from the soul or nature of something (James 1997: 67). The notion of substantial form was mostly utilized as a basis for predicating the properties of things. The power, nature and behavior of an individual thing, was thought to follow from its substantial form. The problem with this theory, it seems, was that the substantial form ended up being rather arbitrarily attributed to unknown and occult-like powers, which were added on in an ad hoc manner whenever explanatory difficulties were encountered. The basic criticism leveled against this doctrine, by both rationalists and empiricists, was that the origin and nature of substantial forms was mysterious and could not be clarified sufficiently. According to James, 'while the opposition of form and matter seems to indicate that they are spiritual phenomena, some of their traits suggest that they must be physical. As well as being concealed, forms are therefore occult in the more derogatory sense of mysterious' (ibid.). The explanations offered by the Aristotelian-scholastic philosophers by appealing to certain powers or faculties were mostly only re-descriptions of the latter, and offered little, if any, further clarification. It seems that the underlying problem for the early modern philosophers was that no observable or measurable (scientific) distinction could be made between the elements of matter and form and that this theory did not further knowledge of things at all.[12] One of the main reasons for rejecting the theory of substantial forms was that these notions were seen to be obscure and confused and

[11] The move away from Aristotelianism in early modern philosophy seems to have resulted in a *return*, of sorts, to elements of Platonism by the likes of Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz. This is something that is often overlooked and underappreciated, according to Hutton (2008: 1-8). On the other hand, although there was a decided attempt to discard much of the Aristotelian-scholastic tradition, the latter still dominated much of the Western thought in the seventeenth century (Viljanen 2009: 57).

[12] The early modern theory of mechanism, which will be discussed later, challenged the traditional Aristotelian view that something's form is the fundamental base for explicating its essential traits. In mechanist thinking the explanation of a particular body's nature and behavior did not depend only on knowledge of its own structure but also on that of the bodies around it (Bolton 1998: 196).

this obscurity indicated that bodies did not have these features and that there was no good reason to attribute them to bodies (Della Rocca 2002: 65). The point here is that there was a general shared desire in the early modern period to make philosophy more scientific and that this underlay the consensus among many early modern philosophers to replace or revise Aristotelian-scholasticism. This is in line with what was argued earlier, that there was a shared motive amongst most early modern philosophers, to become more self-determined and independent in their thinking. This undertaking went hand in hand with the added conviction, that in order to achieve the desired self-determination, philosophy had to become more scientific and had to rid itself of the remnants of a pre-scientific understanding of the world. Aristotelian-scholasticism was seen by many early modern philosophers to belong to an outdated life and world-view. This shared conviction is well illustrated in the words of two of the best-known exponents of the two early modern schools of thought, Descartes and Locke:

> But there is no way of understanding how these same attributes (size, shape and motion) can produce something else whose nature is quite different from their own - like the substantial forms and real qualities which many <philosophers> suppose to inhere in things; and we cannot understand how these qualities or forms could have the power subsequently to produce local motions in other bodies. (CSM I: 285.)

> But the fault has been, that faculties have been spoken of, and represented, as so with many agents. For it being asked, what it was that digested the meat in our stomachs? It was a ready, and a very satisfactory answer, to say that is was the digestive faculty. What was it that made anything come out of the body? The expulsive faculty. What moved? The motive faculty: and so in the mind, the intellectual faculty, or the understanding, understood; and the elective faculty, or the will, willed or commanded: which is in short to say, that the ability to digest, digested; and the ability to move, moved; and the ability to understand, understood. (EHU: 228.)

Generally speaking, many leading early modern rationalists and empiricists rejected one of the fundamental aspects of Aristotelian-scholasticism, the doctrine of substantial forms.[13] The theory that many early modern thinkers, both rationalist and empiricist, embraced, in opposition to the largely discarded doctrine of substantial forms, was the new rapidly rising *mechanist* understanding of the natural world.[14] It is the general embracing of this new world-view by most leading early modern philosophers, which characterizes the early modern period and distinguishes it from the earlier era of Aristotelian scholasticism.[15]

A second shared sentiment has to do with the view that the human mind had somehow become *ill* and that philosophy in general needed to act as a kind of healing influence or as *medicine* for the mind, to purify the mind of the many infective inadequate ideas that had rendered it ill and prevented it from playing a leading role in the envisaged progress of philosophy and of mankind in general. This notion of *medicina mentis* is quite common in early modern thought. Apart from Spinoza's theme of *emending the intellect* that pervades his works, Descartes also employs this notion in his *Regulae* (CSM I: 30,32). Locke describes irrationality in humans as a kind of *madness*, in need of emendation (EHU: 156, 354). It is further notable in this regard that the main philosophical work of Walther Ehrenfried von Tschirnhaus (1651-1708), an experimental empiricist and friend of Spinoza, was actually named *Medicina Mentis*.[16] According to Israel (2002: 379) Tschirnhaus influenced the work of Balthasar Bekker, who aimed his writings at ridding the world of the notion of all occult type beings (devils, witches, spirits, etc), which

[13] Spinoza seems to reject the theory of substantial forms quite sharply: 'So one should not expect us to say anything about substantial forms and real accidents, for these and things of this type are plainly absurd' (CM2/1 S: 189).
[14] The early modern mechanist theory will be discussed in chapter three.
[15] This development is well articulated by Israel: 'Yet it was unquestionably the rise of powerful new philosophical systems, rooted in the scientific advances of the early seventeenth century and especially the mechanistic views of Galileo, which chiefly generated that vast *Kulturkampf* between traditional, theologically sanctioned ideas about Man, God, and the universe and secular, mechanistic conceptions which stood independently of any theological sanction. What came to be called the 'New Philosophy', which in most cases meant Cartesianism, diverged fundamentally from the essentially magical, Aristotelian, 'pre-scientific' view of the world which had everywhere prevailed hitherto and worked to supplant it, projecting a rigorous mechanism which, in the eyes of adversaries, inevitably entailed the subordination of theology and church authority to concepts rooted in a mathematically grounded philosophical reason – albeit most 'Cartesians' of the 1650s and 1660s never intended to undermine theology's hegemony or weaken the sway of the churches to anything like the extent which rapidly resulted' (2002: 14).
[16] See Schonfeld (1998) for a general discussion of the work of Tschirnhaus.

were, in his view, one of the main sources of ideas that rendered the human mind ill. Spinoza, of course, also denied the existence of devils and such things, in the strongest terms as figments of human imagination and the sure sign of an *ill* mind (ST2/18;25). Although, as we shall see in the ensuing chapters, the methods used by rationalists and empiricists differed quite radically, there was an important consensus that the human mind had to be developed and that the latter entailed the emending or purification of its inadequate or irrational ideas. As said, there was a general consensus that the old medieval imaginative world-view needed to be replaced by a more modern scientific outlook.[17] One of the key ingredients of the *medicina mentis* project was the need for adequate ideas, which was sought by Descartes and Spinoza in their concept of the intellect as able to think adequately by virtue of it possessing clear and distinct ideas.

I argue that the important change introduced by the rationalists regarding the nature of the human mind, was the view that the intellect is able to grasp the essence of things adequately. Descartes, the principal innovator of early modern rationalist thought, furthered the view that the intellect, by virtue of having innate[18]ideas, has

[17] A positive approach to science was shared by many theologians (especially reformed) and by many early modern philosophers (although not all) who maintained their personal religious convictions. There was a strong, shared intent in the latter circles to rid Christianity of a host of superstitious beliefs that were seen to undermine the pure doctrines taught by Scripture. Van Ruler (2000) gives an excellent account of this shared motivation amongst many early moderns to rid philosophy and theology of its credulity. In the article of Van Ruler an account is given of the classic book by Balthasar Bekker *The World Bewitched* (1691) in which Bekker offers a wide range of theological and philosophical arguments in order to combat the idea that ghosts, devils, and angels influence natural or historical events. According to Van Ruler, Bekker draws important conclusions from the philosophy of Descartes. It is clear, however, that the motives for his critique are religious rather than philosophical. For two centuries it had been a goal of the Protestant Reformation to accentuate God's majesty and to establish the idea of his absolute power over creation. Bekker's denial that ghosts and devils are active in the world is a logical consequence of the belief that there is no room for demigods in nature. Bekker thus adds a final touch to the project of the Reformation, by removing devils and spirits from nature, his main aim being to distinguish superstition from true faith. For Bekker, the Protestantization of Christian dogma could only be completed by making everything in nature's course depend on God's unique power and providence. In particular it was the new philosophy of Descartes that attracted him, according to Van Ruler. See also Israel's discussion of this important and interesting subject (2002: 375-405).

[18] In Descartes and Spinoza the theory of innate ideas is invoked to explain how we can have knowledge of certain things that seem to go beyond experience, either because of their universal applicability, or because its subject matter transcends experiential reality. The notion of innate ideas in Western philosophy goes back to Plato's quite famous theory of anamnesis found in his dialogue the *Meno*. For Plato knowledge is seen to be in the soul from eternity and learning is seen as the recovery of what one has forgotten rather than the teaching of something new. This is demonstrated in the *Meno* when Socrates asks a simple boy certain questions about geometry, which the boy himself answers, after receiving certain guiding questions from Socrates. The important point is that the boy was not told the answers, but rather discovered them to be already in

adequate knowledge of the fundamental features or natures of the world, from which an indubitable system of knowledge (*scientia*) can be produced. This theory included the view that the mind could act quite independently and distinguish between its true and false ideas and emend or purify itself from its inadequate ideas. Although the mind had somehow lost sight of its inherent ability to know the truth, this could be restored, following the new rationalist method. The empiricists, on the other hand, had a more reserved view of the mind and mostly denied the theory of innate ideas. They saw the mind to be more passive and dependent on the senses for its ideas. In their view the mind could make much progress through experience and experimentation, but they did not share the optimism of the rationalists that the mind could produce certain knowledge of the essence of things and know things as they are in themselves. Although the empiricists thought that much of the medieval superstition could be removed through the results of experimental science, many of them retained the notion of the human mind as subject to man's *fallen* nature and thus unable to have certainty about its ideas or to have knowledge about the nature of God. The latter was seen to belong to the domain of the Church alone, through the authority of received learning, official dogma and Scripture.[19] I understand Spinoza's philosophy in general and in particular his TdIE, to be involved in this general endeavor of *medicina mentis* found in early modern philosophy. His project of emending the intellect (henceforth the *EIP*) can generally be described as participating in the project of helping mankind regain active control of the mind by discovering how to 'use reason aright' (TP2 S: 684).

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his mind. For Plato the role of a true philosopher is likened to that of a midwife, to deliver knowledge inherently held. In early-modern rationalism the theory of innate ideas is mainly attributed to Descartes, but is also found in Spinoza and Leibniz. This theory argues for the existence of certain inborn ideas in the human mind that are universal to all humanity. Such ideas refer to ethical truths, the notions of causality, good and evil, mathematical truths and the idea of God. Leibniz emphasized innate mathematical truths and certain truisms, such as the identity of indiscernibles. This theory of innatism marks an important difference between the early rationalists and the empiricists. The latter thought that all ideas should be attributed to learning and experience. Whereas the rationalists conceived the human mind to have a certain given structure, the empiricists, such as Locke, argued that the mind was a *tabula rasa* or a clean slate, without any inborn or inscribed ideas.

[19] See TTP15: 'I am utterly astonished that men can bring themselves to make reason, the greatest of all gifts and a light divine, subservient to letters that are dead, and may have been corrupted by human malice; that it should be considered no crime to denigrate the mind, the true handwriting of God's word, declaring it to be corrupt, blind and lost, whereas it is considered to be a heinous crime to entertain such thoughts of the letter, a mere shadow of God's word' (S: 521).

1.3. Overview and method

After introducing the early modern theme of the quest for epistemological *certainty* and having given some historical and philosophical context to this endeavor in the *first chapter*, the *second chapter* aims to outline the foundation of Spinoza's EIP. The main focus here is on the close association between the notions of essence and conceivability in his thought. I argue that the given adequate conceivability of God's essence forms the crucial starting point for attaining epistemological surety in Spinoza. Descartes's important contribution in developing a rationalist method is firstly discussed, the crux of which is his principle of simplicity as found in his early work, the *Regulae*. In a nutshell, his simplicity theory argues for the existence of fundamental features in the natural world, which are conceived to be ontologically and conceptually simple. This theory forms the basis for Descartes's claim that such simple natures are necessarily adequately intuited by the human intellect. An important aspect of his theory is that the intellect contains adequate ideas of such simple natures innately. I argue further that Descartes's philosophical method is based on the notion of knowing something on the basis of another, i.e. that that which is unknown is inferred or deduced from that which is given as known. I contend in this work, that with regard to method, Spinoza follows Descartes quite closely. Hereafter, the attention then turns to Spinoza and I firstly establish if his EIP is plausible by considering his account of adequate ideas. Although Spinoza does claim that finite minds do have adequate ideas, it has been argued that his system does not allow for this. My finding is to the contrary, that his theory of adequate ideas is credible and his EIP as well. After this Spinoza's use of the notion of essence in developing his own method is considered. Central to his method is the theory of adequate ideas in which he forges a very close tie between the notions of essence, cause and conceivability. I argue that, in Spinoza, if the essence of something involves existence, the method of knowing it will differ from something whose essence does not involve existence. This distinction underpins the basic approach in his method that God's essence, which involves existence and is completely simple, can be adequately known through itself, whereas, the essences of modes can only be adequately conceived through their proximate cause, which is God. I argue further that the principle of simplicity with

regard to God's essence, commits Spinoza to the notion of essence monism, which underpins his EIP. The core idea in this regard is that God's immanent essence or power is simple and is necessarily expressed in his attributes and infinite modes and in the essences and existence of all things and that this fundamental ontological reality forms the foundation for the adequate conceivability of our world. After a discussion of the adequate conception of modes, the chapter ends with some thoughts on the ethical intent of Spinoza's work and how this ties in with his task of emending the intellect, which seems more like an epistemological project. The last matter attended to concerns the question why anyone should undertake Spinoza's arduous task of emending our intellect? I argue that an essential trait of being human, for Spinoza, is to *think* and consequently that our happiness depends on the contentment of the mind, which can only follow from having adequate ideas. In Spinoza's view our mind can only be put to rest by fully consenting to its true and certain ideas.

The *third chapter* follows on from this last subject and attempts to clarify why Spinoza gives preference to the mind, over the body, in his search for a foundation for human wellbeing. Spinoza associates the *acquiescentia in se ipso* very closely with self-determination, which for him is only possible when we live in accordance with reason. This tenet explains his encouragement to perfect our intellect as far as possible. I argue further, that this preference towards the mind has much to do with the advent of the mechanist theory of the natural world in the early modern period and its view of natural bodies as entities that are wholly externally determined. Spinoza views the intellect as self-determined or active insofar as it possesses adequate ideas of God's essence, whereas the type of ideas associated with the body, i.e. sensory ideas, are seen to be passively received, incomplete and obscure. It is mainly for this reason, I claim, that Descartes and Spinoza turn to the intellect in their pursuit of certitude. The primary aim of this chapter is to clarify the early modern view, that the mind is seen to be mankind's *better part*. I start by explaining Spinoza's notion of the essence of thought. In Spinoza the essence of all ideas is to affirm their objects as far as possible. Whereas the mind's full affirmation of a true idea produces a feeling of joy, the partial agreement between an idea and its object leads to a feeling of sadness. This is so because in the case of

adequate ideas the mind's consenting essence is unchecked, but in the case of partial sensory ideas the essence of the mind, i.e. its striving to affirm, is restricted, which leads to a feeling of discontent. This theory plays a crucial role in guiding our minds towards the adequate idea of God's essence, which is the goal of Spinoza's EIP. The nature of the intellect is considered next and I claim that Spinoza conceives the human intellect to be involved in God's intellect and to contain the true idea of God. Seeing that there is a close association between adequate knowledge and joy, the reason for Spinoza turning to the intellect in search of self-contentment becomes clearer. In the second section of this chapter the nature of the body is discussed. Because Spinoza sees it to be beyond the reach of a finite mind to conceive the infinite chain of natural causes that determine the durational existence of bodies, adequate knowledge of this realm, is regarded as incomplete and contingent. In this the body is seen to be very different to the mind and gives the reason why the quest for certainty in Spinoza is associated with the adequate ideas of the intellect and that, by and large, he and other early modern rationalists turned their backs on sensory ideas in their pursuit of certitude.

Hereafter the attention turns mainly to Spinoza's TdIE. In contrast to the more general style of the first three chapters, the text of the TdIE is now followed rather closely, to provide additional textual evidence for my explication of Spinoza's method given thus far. The *fourth chapter* aims to uncover the main elements comprising Spinoza's method. Because the subject of method in Spinoza's TdIE and Descartes's *Regulae* seem to have much in common, I present the basic elements of their method in a comparative way. I emphasize however, that despite the apparent close affinity between these two great thinkers with regard to certain key elements, Spinoza's own version of a rationalist method does depart from that of Descartes in important ways. The matter's attended to here include the relationship between the intellect and certainty, the theory of simplicity, the use of deduction and other innate tools, such as axioms. In the final section of this chapter, the key role of definitions in Spinoza's method is discussed. The chapter ends with a brief explication of the properties of the intellect.

Chapter five continues the theme that Spinoza's EIP is closely related to the early modern philosophical pursuit of certainty. The quest for certitude includes the

search for the best *kind* of knowledge for its purpose, which is the main subject of this chapter. I claim that the attainment of the highest form of knowledge in Spinoza, i.e. intuition or knowledge of the third kind represents the very pinnacle of certitude in knowledge. The chapter starts off with a discussion of Spinoza's *historiola mentis* as found in the TdIE, i.e. the survey of knowledge types. The main body of this chapter however focuses on the development of Spinoza's theory of knowledge, especially that of adequate knowledge. Whereas Spinoza's theory of inadequate knowledge, as found in the early TdIE, stayed much the same, I argue that his theory of adequate knowledge evolved quite a bit in his later thinking. I suggest that the supposed development in his theory of adequate knowledge is that he conceives *two* actions of the intellect, namely reason and intuition, which have each their own role to play but are also seen to work together to reach the highest level of certainty. Whereas reason's role is to guide us towards that which is best for us, it seems that reason on its own, is not able to lead us to our highest good, i.e. our intellectual perfection. I argue that Spinoza's intuitive knowledge of the third kind unites us with our highest good, i.e. the most perfect idea of God in us. Whereas reason demonstrates this highest truth adequately, it is only by intuition that we experience it to be certainly true. This intuitive insight leads to the highest level of knowledge, which Spinoza describes in terms of love, the amor Dei intellectualis. I argue that Spinoza's notion of self-contentment is closely associated with the discovery of intuitive knowledge of God. The chapter ends with a brief discussion of the different roles that reason and intuition play in our struggle against the passions, which is an important aspect of the EIP.

The *amor Dei intellectualis* is closely associated with Spinoza's rather problematic theory of the eternity of the mind, which is the subject of the *sixth* chapter. I argue that the successful completion of Spinoza's EIP depends on discovering certainty with regard to the eternal nature of the intellect. I contend that the theory of the mind's eternity is an indispensible element of Spinoza's search for certitude and that it serves mainly this purpose in his philosophy. In my view, Spinoza conceives the human intellect, which is a part of human mind, to be eternal by virtue of it being involved in and part of God's eternal and infinite intellect. In my opinion, the theory of the mind's eternity in Spinoza is not intended to secure

some notion of personal immortality, but serves mainly to support his project of attaining epistemological certainty. The highest form of certitude for Spinoza is to know with certainty that the human intellect is part of God's intellect and is therefore continuously dependent on God's concurring thinking force. This insight guarantees that our adequate ideas are certainly true. Some concluding remarks are found in chapter *seven*.

With regard to *method*, the most important element has been the continuous reading of Spinoza's works. In practice, this has amounted to a continuous revisiting of his texts over some years and also much meditating on them. Although Spinoza's *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect* is my main focus, I have tried to also read, in depth, as many of his other works as possible, such as the *Short Treatise on God, Man and His Well-Being*, the *Ethics*, most of his *Theological Political Treatise* and the first two chapters of the *Political Treatise*. Spinoza's correspondence has also been very important and helpful. When faced with interpretational difficulties, which often happens with Spinoza, I have found inspiration to continue, from the texts themselves and most of my questions have been answered in this way. An important element in my approach stems from the method that Spinoza himself develops. He explains this method in the TTP in the chapter on the interpretation of Scripture. His method is to firstly ascertain that which is universal and forms the basis of all the teachings of Scripture. He argues that such doctrines are so clearly taught everywhere in Scripture that no one has ever been in doubt as to their meaning. After having acquired a proper understanding of the universal doctrine, we can proceed to other matters, which are perhaps of less importance. With regard to anything ambiguous or obscure, such things must be explained in the light of the universal doctrine (TTP7 S: 460). I have found Spinoza's method to be very useful when confronted with interpretational challenges. I have then tried to understand the apparent difficulty in the light and guidance of Spinoza's most important and fundamental doctrine, that of substance monism. I have of course always been abundantly aware of my own limitations and have constantly turned to many secondary works on early-modern philosophy, Spinoza, Descartes and others. I have mainly focused on the Anglo-American scholarship in this regard. It goes without saying that I have also

discussed my work with my supervisors, colleagues, associates and friends as much as has been possible. One of the challenges has been that the subject of my dissertation, i.e. Spinoza's concept of emending the intellect, has, as such, received very little attention in secondary literature. Certain elements of this subject have at least been attended to by other scholars, such as the early-modern theory of ideas and the theory of essence, and others. This has been helpful. Another important aspect in my methodology has been to pay attention to the relevant historic and philosophical context of Spinoza's work. Although philosophy is sometimes thought to be more of a theoretical endeavor, I have found that acquiring some understanding of the historical background that philosophers worked and lived in to be rather helpful in understanding their writings. I have tried, where relevant, to supply such information. As suggested, another extremely important and helpful aspect regarding contextualization has been the study of other relevant early modern philosophers, such as Descartes and also John Locke.

2. Certainty and Essence

Although the rationalist and empiricist philosophers of the early modern period shared some commitments and goals, they differed decisively in basic approach and method.[20] For Spinoza, empiricism as a scientific theory seems to have made little sense. In his view scientific knowledge amounted to having certitude, which depends on the mind having adequate ideas on which a body of certain knowledge can be built. Knowledge based on only experience can never provide such conviction:[21]

> If anyone, in arguing for or against a proposition which is not self-evident, seeks to persuade others to accept his view, he must prove his point from premises that are granted, and he must convince his audience on empirical grounds or by force of reason; that is, either from what sense-perception tells them occurs in Nature, or through self-evident intellectual axioms. Now unless experience is such as to be clearly and distinctly understood, it cannot have so decisive an effect on a man's understanding and dispel the mists of doubt as when the desired conclusion is deduced solely from intellectual axioms, that is,

[20] A good illustration of the basic difference in approach is found in the controversial exchange between the empiricist Boyle and the rationalist Spinoza. Boyle considered the way of experimentation as the only reliable basis for knowledge and did not agree with the high regard that Spinoza and others had for human reason. Boyle's aim was to construct, on the basis of purely experimental work, a mechanistic type universe, but one lacking inherent creative drive and accommodating, to a certain extent, the possibility of the *supernatural* transcending the laws of nature and allowing for the possibility of miracles and divine providence. He was the chief inspirer of the argument from design, which was quite popular amongst the more moderate appliers of human reason (Israel 2002: 253). For Spinoza, however, experiments can illustrate but never conclusively prove any general proposition. For example, no experiment can prove that there are no ghosts or devils or that there are no miracles in nature. Nor could an experiment produce knowledge of essences or the theory of substance monism. As Israel says: 'Yet in Spinoza's view, all these 'truths' can be demonstrated by means of philosophical reason and must be acknowledged if we wish to attain truth and the highest degree of human perfection' (ibid.: 255).

[21] Although the development of a rationalist method of knowing the essence of things was his main goal, Spinoza was not dismissive of empirical research. It is notable that he rates experimental research highly and sees the latter as essential for bringing his whole philosophical project to a conclusion. I argue later that experiential knowledge of the body is actually crucial for his EIP. We read in the TdIE§103: 'Before we embark upon an enquiry into our knowledge of particular things, it will be timely for us to treat of those aids, all of which will serve to assist us in knowing how to use our senses and to conduct experiments under fixed rules and proper arrangement, such as will suffice to determine the thing which is the object of our enquiry. From these we may finally infer what are the laws of eternal things that govern the things production, and may gain an insight into its inmost nature, as I shall duly show.' Sadly, Spinoza did not get round to completing the final part of his project. He did however actively participate in the activities of natural scientists in his time and was himself a keen experimenter. For more on Spinoza's interest and activity in experimental research see Israel (2002: 242-257) and Klever (1996: 33-34).

> from the mere force of the intellect and its orderly apprehensions. (TTP5 S: 441.)

In this chapter I outline the rationalist method developed and employed by Descartes and Spinoza in their search for truth and certainty. The overriding aim here is to clarify the very close correlation between the notions of essence and adequate ideas in their thought on method. An important task is also to introduce and explain the notion of *essence monism* in Spinoza's thought and to clarify its vital role in his philosophy and especially in his EIP. The relation between the EIP as a seemingly epistemological undertaking and the ethical intention of Spinoza's overall work will also be attended to.

2.1. Descartes and his *Regulae*[22]

The most important figure, without doubt, leading the emerging early modern rationalist movement and developing its inventive method was Descartes.[23] Certain elements of his method play an indispensible role in Spinoza's development of his own version of a rationalist method. In the following I will briefly introduce the most important elements in Descartes's method as philosophical background for Spinoza's own approach.[24]

In line with the pursuit of certainty mentioned earlier, Descartes's method is aimed at producing scientific knowledge (*scientia*) of nature by clearly and distinctly conceiving its fundamental aspects or principles. In short, his method is based on knowing something on the basis of another. The basic idea is that that which is

[22] I assume only a general understanding of Descartes's philosophy based mainly on his early *Rules for the Direction of the Mind* or the *Regulae*, where he first develops his method.

[23] 'Indeed, it does not seem too much of an exaggeration to say, paraphrasing Whitehead, that early modern philosophy consists largely of footnotes to Descartes' (Carriero 2009: 1).

[24] Descartes's general influence on Spinoza's philosophy is beyond doubt, although the extent to which this is the case is often debated. The most likely source of Spinoza's Cartesianism is the circle of Dutch Cartesians that he became associated with after his excommunication from his Jewish community. This association with the Dutch Cartesian coterie lasted for many years and included private tutoring by the radical Dutch thinker, Franciscus Van den Enden (1602-74), his private circle of Cartesian minded friends and also his exposure to Cartesian academics at the University of Leiden. Spinoza's Platonist traits can also be attributed to the mentioned university, whose academics exhibited some quite strong Platonist-Augustinian traits during the time he attended lectures there (Van Ruler 2008: 166-68). In this regard see also Klever (1996: 13-60) and Nadler (1999: 102-115). In the view of Steenbakkers: 'For an understanding of Spinoza's notion of method, we must take into account the crucial Cartesian development of this theme' (2009: 46).

unknown is inferred and concluded from what is clearly and distinctly known or given as known. Descartes strongly promoted the theory regarding the human intellect's ability to directly intuit the common features of things with certainty.[25] He thought the human intellect was naturally able to form clear and distinct ideas of the *simple natures* of things (which will be discussed shortly), of which all natural things are composed. Now for Descartes, to know something to the highest degree of certainty, for human beings, is to clearly understand how such simple natures contribute to the basic composition of all things (CSM I: 49). In Descartes's view, it is to such simple natures that the mind relates when it knows things clearly and distinctly and with complete certainty. The ideas of such homogenous natures were termed *simple ideas* and were seen to be self-evident, seemingly even to the most basic mind (ibid.: 45). Descartes's commitment to the natural ability of the human intellect to have adequate knowledge is stated from the outset in the *Regulae*:[26]

> If someone sets himself the problem of investigating every truth for the knowledge of which human reason is adequate – and this, I think, is something everyone who earnestly strives after good sense should do once in his life – he will indeed discover by means of the Rules we have proposed that nothing can be known prior to the intellect, since knowledge of everything else depends on the intellect, and not *vice versa*. (CSM I: 30.)

Descartes introduces the *secret* of his method in Rule 6. His 'main secret' is that 'some things can be known on the basis of others' and the aim of this method is 'not to inspect the isolated natures of things, but to compare them with each other so that some can be known on the basis of others' (ibid.: 21). According to Rule 12 his method consist of two basic elements. The first is to discover 'what presents itself to

[25] It was mainly this claim of *certainty* that alarmed many theologians in Descartes's time. The main difficulty stemmed from the claim to be certain of our true ideas. In early modern times, most theologians and the Church believed that philosophical reason could never attain certainty in fallen man. Reason was seen by them to be valuable for processing data produced by the senses or ideas received by revelation. As seen earlier, philosophy was regarded as the handmaiden of theology and unable to produce its own true and ideas (Verbeek 2002: 172). Descartes suggested the solution of a separation between theology and philosophy. Spinoza did not follow this route and thought *all* knowledge to be about ideas. He saw no reason why a particular class of ideas, such as religious ideas, should be treated differently. For him all ideas should be subject to the scrutiny of philosophical reason.

[26] It is highly probable that a copy of this early work was available in the Netherlands during Spinoza's time, although it was only officially published after the death of Spinoza. See Nadler (2006: 181), who supports this possibility.

us spontaneously?' and the second is to determine 'how can one thing be known on the basis of something else?' (ibid.: 39). The first element involves intuiting clear and distinct ideas of the simple natures. The second refers to the process of deduction, by which true ideas of other things are inferred from the given simple ones.[27] Descartes refers to this basic method in his later and more mature work, the *Principles of Philosophy*:

> First of all, I would have wished to explain what philosophy is, beginning with the most commonplace points. For example, the word 'philosophy' means the study of wisdom, and by 'wisdom' is meant not only prudence in our everyday affairs but also a perfect knowledge of all things that mankind is capable of knowing, both for the conduct of life and for the preservation of health and the discovery of all manner of skills. In order for this kind of knowledge to be perfect it must be deduced from first causes; thus, in order to set about acquiring it – and it is this activity to which the term 'to philosophize' strictly refers – we must start with the search for first causes or principles. These principles must satisfy two conditions. First, they must be so clear and so evident that the human mind cannot doubt their truth when it attentively concentrates on them; and, secondly, the knowledge of other things must depend on them, in the sense that the principles must be capable of being known without knowledge of these other matters, but not vice versa. Next, in deducing from these principles the knowledge of things which depend on them, we must try to ensure that everything in the entire chain of deductions which we draw is very manifest. (CSM I: 179-180.)

To reiterate, Descartes's method of knowing one thing on the basis of another, involves the direct intuition of certain simple natures, which are common to all things and clearly and distinctly known to the intellect. These given true ideas are the indubitable inception points from which true ideas of the universal principles comprising all other things can be deduced. This basic method forms the basis on

[27] See Dear (1998: 158) for a good discussion of philosophical method in seventeenth-century thinking. He describes Descartes's method as *essentialist* and an example of the early modern rationalist vision of the deductive inter - connection of all knowledge, based on the theory of simple natures. In his view, the rationalist endeavor was to 'encompass the essences of things with certainty', whereas the empiricists eschewed essentialism and largely abandoned method and certainty in favor of a program of probabilistic knowledge (ibid.: 161).

which a body of scientific knowledge can be built. I contend that Spinoza employs a similar version of this basic Cartesian method[28] in his own work and that his TdIE is specifically tasked with its development.

In summary, the starting point for the rationalist method developed by Descartes and Spinoza, is the conviction that things are in reality as they are contained in our ideas. In their view the human intellect is endowed with true ideas of the universal features of the natural world and that we can know with certainty that such features exist in reality. Moreover, they were convinced that from these basic true ideas first principles (Descartes) or definitions (Spinoza) can be produced, from which other true ideas of the essences of all other things can be inferred. Of crucial importance is their claim to have attained *certainty* with regard to their true ideas, which is indeed a radical view to have adhered to, especially in early modern times. As mentioned, this rationalist approach is in contrast to the prevailing Aristotelian-scholastic view that the human mind is more passive or receptive and almost entirely dependent on sense perception for knowledge of the natural world. The epistemological focus in the empiricist tradition is based on producing abstract and general knowledge of the world (Carriero 2009: 3). The empiricists did not think it possible for the mind to know nature as it is in itself and to have complete sureness of its ideas.

2.2. Adequate ideas, simplicity and essence monism

It is important, at the start of this work, to attend to Spinoza's theory of adequate ideas, to establish if it is indeed possible for us to have true ideas at all. Although Spinoza states that a finite human mind does have adequate ideas,[29] important questions have been raised in scholarship suggesting that his system does not allow for this.[30] It needs then to be clarified what kind of ideas are adequate for Spinoza and to ascertain if a finite mind can indeed possess them. If Spinoza's account of adequate

[28] See Steenbakkers (2009: 42-53) where he argues that Spinoza's basic method employs these two Cartesian elements and that the methods of Descartes and Spinoza seems to be modeled on the classical geometrical method of Euclid (c.a. 300 B.C.E), in which propositions are derived from a few starting axioms and definitions.

[29] In the TdIE§33 Spinoza says (emphasis added): 'A true idea (*for we do have a true idea*) is something different from its object (ideatum)'. In the *Ethics* we read: 'The human mind has an adequate knowledge of the eternal and infinite essence of God' (2p47).

[30] Della Rocca (2003: 205) states that it is a problem to see how a finite mind can acquire adequate ideas in Spinoza's epistemology.

ideas is found to be implausible or inconsistent, his EIP seems doomed to failure from the outset.

One of the arguments leveled against Spinoza's claim to have adequate ideas, has to do with his stipulation that the 'knowledge of an effect depends on, and involves, the knowledge of the cause' (1ax4). For Spinoza, the certain manner in which a particular thing exists is brought about by an infinite chain of preceding finite natural causes and seeing that it seems impossible for a finite mind to possess a complete idea of such an infinite causal chain, it is argued that his requirement for adequacy cannot be met. This outcome, however, is not crippling for Spinoza's EIP. I argue that Spinoza's pursuit of certainty does not include adequate knowledge of the durational existence of finite things, but is primarily aimed at acquiring adequate knowledge of the essence of things. I argue that Descartes and Spinoza thought it possible to have certitude with regard to the essence of things, but to only have partial knowledge of the realm of durational natural phenomena.[31] The fact that they did not have adequate knowledge of both the essence and the durational existence of things did not lessen their claim to possess scientific knowledge of the world. For Descartes and Spinoza, adequate knowledge of the essence of things amounts to *scientia*.[32] It is of more importance, for my task, to establish if Spinoza's theory pertaining to adequate knowledge of God's essence is feasible. In Spinoza's method the attainment of adequate ideas of the essence of things depends crucially on a finite mind being able to know God's essence adequately.

Spinoza's requirement for having adequate ideas has two aspects to it. Firstly, for an idea to be adequate in our mind, it must be contained in its entirety in our mind (TdIE§73) and secondly, our mind must also possess an adequate idea of the cause of this idea (1ax4). As mentioned above these requirements are deemed nigh impossible to meet with regard to knowing an existing finite thing adequately. For my purpose, the more important question is if a finite mind is able to have an adequate idea of God's essence, i.e. to contain the idea of God's essence in its entirety and to have

[31] McCracken (1998: 815-818), correctly in my view, emphasizes this point: 'Note that it is the essence of things, including the human mind, that Spinoza here said we could come to know adequately from a consideration of God's attributes, for he did not undertake to deduce the existence of the human mind, or indeed of any specific thing from God's nature alone.'

[32] A good example of this view is found in Spinoza's *Political Treatise*. There he writes (my emphasis): '*Any natural thing can be adequately conceived, whether it actually exists or not*. Therefore, just as the coming into existence of natural things cannot be concluded from their definition, so neither can their perseverance in existing; for their essence in the form of idea is the same after they have begun to exist as it was before they existed' (TP2 S: 683).

adequate knowledge of its cause.

It seems clear that for Spinoza we can, at least, have adequate ideas of the common notions:

> Hence it follows that there are certain ideas or notions common to all men. For (by Lemma 2) all bodies agree in certain aspects, which must be (preceding Pr.) conceived by all adequately, or clearly and distinctly. (2p38cor.)

In Spinoza, common ideas or notions are ideas of certain properties of things that are found universally. Examples of such properties are that all bodies 'may move at varying speeds and may be absolutely in motion or absolutely at rest' (2p13lem2dem). Such properties of motion and rest, and that all bodies are capable of being in motion and rest, are common to all bodies and our ideas of them are common notions. For Marshall (2008: 62-66) the common notions mentioned above are basic principles that play a fundamental role in Spinoza's physics.[33] Marshall argues that Spinoza's common notions should be understood to be of properties or characteristics that follow directly from a divine attribute. Motion and rest in matter is an immediate infinite mode that follows immediately from the attribute of extension. Being a universal law of physics the capacity for motion and rest will necessarily be involved in every mode of extension, i.e. in every part and in every affection of bodies. From this it follows, that this common notion will also be involved in every idea of those parts and affections. The result is that, since the common property is completely present in each mode of extension, the common notion is also completely present in every idea of natural bodies and in the parts and affections of natural bodies and, consequently, is necessarily contained in its entirety in the human mind and its ideas of natural bodies and their affections. However, for a common notion to be an adequate idea, the causal requirement for adequacy in ideas must also be met. Seeing that an immediate infinite mode is caused by or follows from the attribute of extension, Spinoza's system stipulates that it must be conceived through the idea of its divine attribute. For the mind to do this, it must have an adequate idea of God's essence, which idea we do have:

[33] For Curley (1988: 45-6), common notions are of the immediate infinite modes and those pertaining to the natural bodies can be likened to universal laws of physics.

> The idea of a particular thing actually existing necessarily involves both the essence and the existence of the thing (2p8cor). But particular things cannot be or be conceived without God (1p15). Now since they have God for their cause (2p6), insofar as he is considered under that attribute of which the things themselves are modes, their ideas (lax4) must necessarily involve the conception of their attribute; that is (1def6), the eternal and infinite essence of God. (2p45dem.)

Spinoza's argument in this demonstration employs the demand that in order for us to form an idea of something it must be formed under a certain attribute. For example, when we conceive something mental the idea of the attribute of thought is necessarily involved. The same applies when conceiving something of a bodily nature, i.e. we cannot form an idea about a body without using the basic idea of extension. Now, for Spinoza, having true ideas of God's attributes amounts to having a true idea of God's eternal and infinite essence. As with the common notions, the ideas of the attributes are simple and *equal in the part as in the whole*[34]and are therefore possessed by the intellect in their entirety. As I understand it, for Spinoza, our intellect is constituted by such adequate ideas of the attributes and of the common properties pertaining to bodies and minds. Moreover, because God's essence involves existence, he is self-caused and having an adequate idea of God's essence is then to also have an adequate idea of his cause. Therefore, in having any idea whatsoever, the human intellect necessarily has both an idea of God's essence and of the cause of God. To reiterate, when we form ideas, the adequate ideas of the attributes and the common notions following from the former must be employed. For example, in forming a sensory idea of a soccer ball, it must be conceived under the attribute of extension and we must also employ the common notions of size and shape, motion and rest as well as the idea that it has the capacity of being in motion and at rest.

It is apparent that the principle of simplicity, i.e. the notion of something being *equal in the part as in the whole* plays an important role in the above argumentation and this needs further clarification. The notion of simplicity holds that if the nature of something is completely simple, it is homogenous and cannot be divided into parts and is therefore incorruptible and eternal. I think it not contentious to claim that

[34] The important notion of simplicity will be discussed shortly.

Descartes and Spinoza attribute simplicity to God's essence (CM2/5; Ep12; Ep35).[35] Now if something is conceptually simple, one cannot grasp it in part. Something simple is either understood completely, that is adequately, or not at all.[36] Even if we do have only a partial idea of something simple, it will necessarily be adequate, seeing that its nature is equal in the part as in the whole. Now what does the simple idea of God amount to in Spinoza? According to 1p34, God's power is his very essence and I argue that this divine power is conceived to be both ontologically and conceptually simple. The attributes express God's power in a certain way, but *all* attributes necessarily express the simplicity of God's essence, albeit in a certain basic way. I argue that it is the simplicity of God's power, which secures the simplicity of the attributes and that this ensures their adequate conceivability. The simplicity principle seems to also follow through to the immediate infinite modes, which Spinoza describes as being *equal in the part as in the whole* (2p38cor). For Marshall, the common notions have to do with the immediate infinite modes and should be seen to also have simple natures, although they are dependent on their attributes (2008: 70). Seeing that Spinoza's system stipulates that particular things must be conceived by employing the true ideas of the attributes and the common notions, all particular things can therefore be adequately conceived. However, I argue later that such a conception of particular things conceives only their essence adequately, i.e. that which is common to all things and not the particular natures of such things pertaining to their durational existence.

Furthermore, for Spinoza the intellect knows with certainty that things are in reality as they are contained in the intellect in the form of thought (TdIE§108). Therefore the intellect has certainty that its adequate idea of God's very essence

[35] As mentioned earlier, the notion of simple natures and ideas, is used by Descartes in his *Rules for the Direction of the Mind* (CSM I: 43-46). He also refers to such simple natures as *true and immutable natures* (ibid.: 198). Spinoza, in my view, follows Descartes's theory quite closely in this, as is apparent in his TdIE, which will be discussed in chapter four.

[36] In my view, the notion of simplicity grounds Spinoza's theory of a true idea, i.e. that it agrees completely with that of which it is an idea (1ax6). Spinoza seems to follow Descartes in this regard. In the synopsis to the *Meditations on First Philosophy* Descartes says 'that everything that we clearly and distinctly understand is true in a way which corresponds exactly to our understanding of it' (DSPW: 73). In my view, the true ideas of God's essence have a priority in Spinoza's epistemology and are used to form the absolute starting points for his system. For a different view see, Steinberg (2009: 155-160) who argues that Spinoza employs a holistic notion of adequacy in his epistemology in which 'there are no ideas or bits of knowledge that are certain or justified independent of, or prior to, the justification of other, and from which the certainty or justification of all others is derived'. For Nadler Spinoza's idea of truth 'clearly amounts to a correspondence theory of truth' (2006: 161). For Curley (1994: 15), Spinoza seems to employ elements of both correspondence and coherence in his theory of truth.

correlates to an eternal and infinite power, which actually exists in reality. If this were not the case, we would have no surety of a real ontological basis for the universal laws and principles in nature and, consequently, there would be no real basis for our ideas of such fundamental things.[37] In my view, Spinoza's EIP is grounded in God's very essence or power, which is conceived to be completely simple in nature. The simple idea of God's essence provides the basis for the mind being able to possess adequate ideas of the essence of all things and to know with certainty that such ideas are not fictitious. The adequate idea of God's eternal and infinite essence, i.e. his power is necessarily involved in all our ideas (2p46):

> Therefore, that which gives knowledge of the eternal and infinite essence of God is common to all things, and equally in the part as in the whole. And so this knowledge will be adequate (2p38). (2p46dem.)

Seeing that the intellect knows with certainty that things are in reality as they are contained in its adequate ideas (TdIE§108), God's eternal and infinite power is therefore known with certainty to be necessarily involved in the existence of all things, even in those finite things that have only a durational existence. *In Spinoza, God's eternal and infinite power is the inmost reality or essence in our universe, without which nothing can be or be conceived.* This is the focal point of the notion of essence monism in Spinoza, which I argue for. The above explication of Spinoza's theory of adequacy forms the basis for much of the argumentation in this work and the gist of it will be used again whenever relevant.[38]

[37] The real existence of simple natures is a crucial point in the early modern theory of ideas. For Descartes and Spinoza their existence is not discernible to the senses, but only to the intellect. Such simple natures do not exist durationally, in the same way as particular things, although they are not *nothing,* nor are they mere entities of reason. The early rationalist tenet states that *whatever is true is something*. For Spinoza, the intellect 'involves certainty; that is, it knows that things are in reality as they are contained in the intellect in the form of thought' (TdIE§108). The importance of this conviction for Spinoza's whole rationalist philosophical endeavor cannot be overstated.

[38] I am indebted to the fine account that Marshall (2008) gives of this matter and for the key elements in the above argumentation.

2.3. Self-evidence and certainty

A very important and interesting early rationalist conviction is that our true ideas are known *self-evidently*, that is, through themselves and without reference to other ideas (TdIE§70). For Spinoza, our adequate ideas, such as the ideas of God's attributes cannot be derived from other ideas, but must be known independently and directly, i.e. through themselves. Other true ideas are seen to be contained in these foundational ideas and can be inferred from them. For example, the idea of infinite extension is formed independently, whereas the idea of infinite motion in matter is seen to be contained in the former and to follow from it (TdIE§108). The idea of what constitutes the natures of finite bodies, i.e. that all bodies are a certain ratio of motion and rest, can be seen to follow from the idea of infinite motion. All possible ratios or speeds of motion are seemingly contained in the idea of infinite motion itself.[39]

A crucial further question is how the intellect can have *certainty* of its adequate ideas. Descartes and Spinoza seem to think that we are not always conscious of our adequate ideas. Furthermore, how does the intellect distinguish between its adequate and inadequate ideas? This is important, seeing that their rationalist theory of ideas seems to demand that a true idea should be known and certified through itself and that no additional outer verification is needed or could be added to this intellectual validation (TdIE§36). The answer seems to be that our primary adequate ideas carry their clarity and distinctness on their sleeve, so to speak and cannot be reduced to more basic ideas. Recall, according to Descartes and Spinoza, a simple idea is regarded to be completely homogenous and even the slightest grasp of it will be adequate. As said, both Descartes and Spinoza admit that we are not always fully aware or conscious of our true ideas, hence the need for the emendation of the intellect. An important element in attaining certainty is that true ideas seem to have more *reality* than other ideas and impress this on the mind more than inadequate ones. For Spinoza our partial sensory ideas, being not clear and distinct, check or impede the mind and this leads to a feeling of restriction or pain. In the case of true ideas, the mind affirms or gives its full consent to them, without any restriction and this

[39] Descartes thought about this in much the same way. In Rule 12 of the *Regulae* he writes about the necessary conjunction between simple ideas and writes that 'shape is conjoined with extension, motion with duration or time, etc., because we cannot conceive of a shape which is completely lacking in extension, or a motion wholly lacking in duration. Similarly, if I say that 4 and 3 make 7, the composition is a necessary one, for we do not have a distinct conception of the number 7 unless we in a confused way include 3 and 4 in it.

produces a completely different feeling of intellectual joy, which seems to facilitate certainty. The fact that there is complete agreement between the idea and its object or *ideatum* in true ideas produces a certain feeling, which assists in our becoming certain of them.[40] As discussed above, in early rationalism, ideas are seen to have a reality of their own and to exist in the mind (TdIE§33,108). Spinoza attends to the subject of certainty in his *Short Treatise*, which is worth quoting:

> Now the reason why the one is more conscious of his truth than the other is, because the Idea of (his) affirmation (or denial) entirely agrees with the nature of the thing, and consequently has more essence.
>
> Now when someone, in consequence of the whole object having acted upon him, receives corresponding forms or modes of thought, then it is clear that he receives a totally different feeling of the form or character of the object than does another who has not so many causes (acting upon him), and is therefore moved to make an affirmation or denial about that thing by a different and slighter action (because he becomes aware of it only through a few, or the less important, of its attributes). From this, then, we see the perfection of one who takes his stand upon Truth, as contrasted with one who does not take his stand upon it. Since the one changes easily, while the other does not change easily, it follows therefore that the one has more stability and essence than the other has. (ST2/15 S: 80.)[41]

It is this theory of the ability of the intellect to attain certainty of its true ideas that gave Descartes and Spinoza the confidence to claim that the essence of the world is within our cognitive grasp. By using our given primary true ideas in combination with some equally true basic axioms, they thought that certain basic principles or definitions could be established which could ground other true ideas and that the essence of our existence could so-doing become certainly known to us.

[40] This important subject will be discussed in greater detail in chapter five, when Spinoza's theory of knowledge will be attended to.
[41] A similar argument is found in TdIE§35,6 and in 2p43sch.

2.4. Essence in Spinoza

The notion of essence occupies a central place in Spinoza's overall thought and certain aspects of his theory of essence are important in this work. However, Spinoza's use of the term *essence* in his various writings is very rich and it is quite a challenge to understand and to do justice to the many ways in which it is used. In my view, there are at least four different ways in which Spinoza employs the notion of essence in his philosophy. There is an ontological, a psychological-behavioral, an epistemological and a moral use of the term essence. Firstly, Spinoza uses the notion of essence to explain the basic nature of existence, to indicate what fundamentally different kinds of things exist in the world. In his ontology there are basically two kinds of things that exist, substance or God and modes. Now this distinction follows from their respective essences being quite different from one another. Whereas God's essence involves existence, in the case of modes, it does not (1ax7; 1p24). Secondly, in his philosophy of action, regarding how things act or behave, he also utilizes the notion of essence. For Spinoza, the conatus of all things is the striving to persist in their being, which he refers to as the actual essence of all things. Thirdly, as indicated already, the notion of essence plays an important role in his theory of knowledge. His project of attaining certainty in knowledge depends crucially on the mind having adequate ideas of God's essence. Spinoza's fourth use of the notion of essence, related to morality, has to do with his theory of our highest good, or perfection. In this regard, the notion of essence is sometimes used to indicate the best way in which we can achieve our *summum bonum*, which in Spinoza, is linked to self-determination. In early modern rationalist thinking, human agency is often closely associated with the mind insofar as it has adequate ideas. My main concern, in attending to Spinoza's theory of emending the intellect, is to explicate the role that the notion of essence plays in Spinoza's method of attaining true and certain knowledge. My focus will therefore almost exclusively fall on Spinoza's idea of *God's* essence and its role in acquiring adequate knowledge of the essence of all things.[42] I understand Spinoza's idea of God's eternal and infinite essence to refer to the foundational principles or laws found in nature, which determine, in a fundamental way what things are and how

[42] To avoid confusion, when using the term *essence* in this work I refer in the main to *God's* eternal and infinite essence. I will mostly use the term *nature* when referring to Spinoza's other uses of the notion of essence.

they act. The critical role that God's essence plays in Spinoza to enable a finite human mind to have adequate ideas of such basic things will also be investigated.

With regard to the use of the notion of essence in his theory of knowledge, Spinoza forges an extremely important and close tie between the ideas of essence, cause and conceivability. As mentioned, one of the most important axioms in his epistemological method is that 'the knowledge of an effect depends on, and involves, the knowledge of the cause' (1ax4). Now if something is self-caused, then its essence involves existence and the method of knowing it will differ from something that is not self-caused and whose essence does not involve existence. The following passage is a good example of this stipulation in his method:

> As to the first point, our ultimate aim, as we have already said, requires that a thing be conceived either through its essence alone or through its proximate cause. That is, if the thing is in itself, or, as is commonly said, self caused, then it will have to be understood solely through its essence; if the thing is not in itself and needs a cause for its existence, then it must be understood through its proximate cause. For in fact knowledge of the effect is nothing other than to acquire a more perfect knowledge of the cause. (TdIE§92.)[43]

The two basic elements in his method in the above citation recur later as two foundational definitions in part one of the *Ethics*:

> By substance I mean that which is in itself and is conceived through itself; that is, that the conception of which does not require the conception of another thing from which it is to be formed. (1def3.)

> By mode I mean the affections of substance, that is, that which is in something else and is conceived through something else. (1def5.)

[43] See also TdIE§19, where the definition of the most perfect knowledge is given. Spinoza writes: 'Finally there is the perception we have when a thing is perceived through its essence alone, or through knowledge of its proximate cause.' Another good example is found in 4pref: 'For nothing belongs to the nature of anything except that which follows from the necessity of the nature of its efficient cause; and whatever follows from the necessity of the nature of its efficient cause must necessarily be so' (S: 321). In Spinoza, God is the efficient cause of the essences and existence of all things (1p25).

Note the demand in the above citations, that if something is self-caused and self-conceived, it is to be known through its essence *alone*, or *solely* through its essence. However, something that is not in itself and conceived through itself cannot be adequately known through itself, i.e. through its own essence and must therefore be known through its cause.[44] This method of conceiving things adequately acknowledges a fundamental distinction in Spinoza's ontology between the essence of God and that of modes. In Spinoza, God's essence is understood to involve existence whereas the essences of modes do not involve existence (1ax7; 1p24). Another way in which Spinoza formulates this important distinction is that God's essence cannot be distinguished from his existence. He actually goes so far as to say that God's existence and his essence are one and the same (1p20). However, in the case of modes, essence and existence should be distinguished from one another (CM1/2; CM2/1). Spinoza conceives God to be a completely self-subsisting being, whereas modes are understood to be wholly dependent things, totally reliant on God for both their essence and their existence. This strong ontological distinction between God's essence and that of modes forms the basis for Spinoza's method of conceiving things adequately. God's essence is conceived through itself and the essences of modes are conceived through something else that is conceived through itself, namely God. The aim here is to bring attention to how closely the notions of cause, essence and conceivability work together in Spinoza's method. Spinoza's method establishes the adequate ideas of God's essence as the basis for adequately conceiving all things. The important and fundamental role that the notion of essence plays in Spinoza's theory of knowledge is that the adequate idea of God's essence forms the foundational source for all true and certain knowledge. In Spinoza, adequate knowledge of the essences of modes is possible for us, because of their adequate conception being contained in and following from the true idea of God's essence.

[44] I understand *proximate cause* here to refer to God as the efficient cause of the essences and existence of all things.

2.4.1. Substance and essence monism

Of primary importance in Spinoza's philosophical system is his famous doctrine of substance monism.[45] This theory argues for the existence of a single self-subsisting substance that is the sole cause of its own essence and existence and that of all things. For Spinoza, substance or God is a '… Being existing through its own sufficiency or force' (Ep36 S: 857). I argue that Spinoza's doctrine of substance monism includes the notion of *essence monism*, which claims that the only substance or God has its own unique essence, to which all the so-called *divine* properties of eternity, infinity, simplicity, immutability and indivisibility are necessarily assigned. For Spinoza:

> … Substance is not manifold; rather there exists only one Substance of the same nature. (Ep12 S: 788.)

Spinoza conceives the essence of God as involving necessary existence:

> Substance cannot be produced by anything else (1p6cor) and is therefore self-caused (*causa sui*); that is (1def1), its essence necessarily involves existence; that is, existence belongs to its nature. (1p7dem.)

The essence of a self-subsisting Being, that it involves existence, entails that it is both self-caused and conceived. That God is by nature, both self-caused and conceived is very important in Spinoza's system and for his EIP. He often refers to the essence of God as his *very essence,* which denotes his eternal and infinite power (1p34). God is defined as an absolutely infinite being (1def6), which entails (my emphasis)'…the *unqualified* affirmation of the existence of some nature…' (1p8sch1) and '…the infinite enjoyment of existence…' (Ep12 S: 788). Consequently, such a Being, infinite by nature, cannot be conceived as limited or determined at all, without contradiction. To do so, for Spinoza, would amount to annulling our conception of it (ibid.). In Spinoza '… certain things are infinite by their own nature and cannot in any way be conceived as finite, while other things are infinite by virtue of the cause in which they inhere…' (S: 790). The *other things* to which Spinoza refers in the above

[45] I will not here discuss Spinoza's argument for substance monism. For very good recent discussions of this doctrine see Koistinen and Viljanen (2009c: 2-5); Della Rocca (2008: 46-58) and Nadler (2006: 59-63).

citation are the modifications that follow from God. Spinoza's system does allow for modes to be perceived by the senses as finite and manifold, without contradiction, although he does regard such a perception to be superficial and abstract. In Spinoza, to be limited, qualified, modified, determined or, which is the same, finite, involves a negation of some sort and this is seen to be contradictory with regard to the infinite, that is, the *unqualified* essence of God. In Spinoza, the divine essence cannot involve any negation at all (1def6expl) and modes should therefore not, in my view, be regarded as ways in which God, *himself*, is modified or determined. Spinoza writes in this regard to John Hudde in 1666:

> …it is a contradiction to conceive under the negation of existence something whose definition includes existence, or (which is the same thing) affirms existence. And since 'determinate' denotes noting positive, but only the privation of existence of that same nature which is conceived as determinate, it follows that that whose definition affirms existence cannot be conceived as determinate. (Ep36 S: 858.)

That Spinoza defines God as infinite by nature is clearly and firmly set out in the opening definitions of the *Ethics* (1def1; 1def6;) and also in 1p32dem. Furthermore, God's absolutely infinite essence is also, necessarily, 'indivisible and one alone' (Ep12 S: 789). As suggested earlier Spinoza ascribes all the traditional attributes of God, i.e. his infinity, eternity, simplicity, immutability and indivisibility to his essence (1def6; 1def8; 1p13; 1p14 cor1; 1p20cor2). I argue that the notion of essence monism in Spinoza follows from the definition of God as an absolutely infinite Being, whose essence involves existence, that is, a being that is in itself and conceived though itself and whose essence, consequently, is eternal, simple, immutable, indivisible or one[46]. Importantly, Spinoza assigns these divine properties exclusively to God's essence. Spinoza largely maintains the traditional conception of God in his thought, except of course that he sees the divine nature to be immanent and intelligible.[47]

[46] See Ep34 (S: 854), where Spinoza argues for the unity of God on the basis of his necessary existence.

[47] The claim to know the nature of God with certainty was extremely radical in early modern times. The nature of God was traditionally seen to be off limits to human reason and, in fact, unknowable. God's nature was only knowable to some extent through God's own revelation in scripture, which interpretation was controlled exclusively by the church.

For Spinoza, God's very essence or power involves conceivability. Substance or God is not only in himself, he also conceives himself. It is important for Spinoza's project of acquiring adequate knowledge that the definition of God includes that he is *self-conceived*. For Spinoza, God is a being of infinite power and this includes that he wills or affirms (understands) his own essence and everything that follows from it perfectly. This rationalist conception of God's power, will and intellect as one and the same, is clearly at work in Spinoza's thought (CM2/7,8) and is also found in Descartes. In the first part of his *Principles of Philosophy*, he writes that in God 'there is always a single identical and perfectly simple act by means of which he simultaneously understands, wills and accomplishes everything' (CSM I: 201). Spinoza defines God as self-caused and conceived and this, in my view, rules out any notion of the divine essence as a *brute* force or as an inconceivable or unfathomable abyss. As said above, there is no privation or negation at all in God and he understands and affirms his essence positively. God, in Spinoza, is an absolutely perfect self-subsisting being in want of nothing at all. In my view, the modes that follow from the divine essence do not assist or complete God at all and God is not in any way dependent on modes. Modes or effects should be seen to follow from God as *positive* expressions of his power and are always dependent on him (1p16).

That God's essence includes both the power to exist necessarily and to understand his own essence and all that follows from it is of critical importance for Spinoza's project of emending the intellect. The adequate conceivability of God's essence and that of all things is grounded in God's self-conception. For Spinoza, it is only God that can conceive and reveal his essence adequately (ST2/24 S: 98).[48] It should be a bit clearer now why the notion of essence monism is so important in Spinoza's thought and, specifically for his EIP. Without the necessary existence of God's essence that is also adequately conceivable, the cause of all things would remain unknown and Spinoza's project and method of knowing the essence of things with certainty would collapse with brute facts abounding. This method is explained quite clearly by Spinoza in 1p8sch (my emphasis):

[48] As Della Rocca puts it: '…the essence of a substance is to be conceived through itself. So God's essence is just the fact that he is conceivable or intelligible through himself and thus God's essence is just his conceivability…' (2008: 262).

> For by substance they would understand that which is in itself and is conceived through itself; that is, that the knowledge of which does not require the knowledge of any other thing. By modifications they would understand that which is in another thing, and whose conception is formed from the thing in which they are. Therefore, in the case of non - existent modifications *we can have true ideas of them since their essence is included in something, with the result that they can be conceived through that something else, although they do not exist in actuality externally to the intellect.*

For example, based on the above method, the actual essence of anything in the universe can be known with certainty to express God's eternal power and that it will act in accordance with its received conatus, which is to persist in its being to the utmost of its power, i.e. in accordance with its own nature or perfection (1p34dem; 3p6dem). This universal or common essence of all things is contained or included in God's essence and is inferred or deduced from the true idea of God's very essence as power. This basic method echoes in Spinoza's words that whatever is, is in God, and that nothing can be or be conceived without God (1p15). Because Spinoza's EIP hinges crucially on the adequate intelligibility of God's essence any tampering with the adequate conceivability of the divine essence would, for Spinoza, lead to the loss of all adequate ideas and, in his view, would amount to atheism (TTP6 S: 447). Furthermore, as discussed earlier, the Cartesian notion of simplicity plays a crucial role in Spinoza's method of securing the adequate conceivability of God's essence. Any weakening of the absolutely simple nature of God's essence by conceiving it as having parts or distinctions or as manifold, in such a way, that the simplicity of God's essence is compromised, will annul its adequate conceivability.[49] Moreover, in the same vein, any weakening of the eternal and infinite nature of God's power, by introducing certain limiting notions to its nature, threatens the eternal power whereby all modes are created and continuously sustained. In Spinoza, nothing can exist by its own nature or by anything else that has a determined nature. All things are wholly dependent on God's power to exist and to persist in their being. The total dependence of all things on God is the very nature of existence and it is the notion of essence monism, in my view, which secures this foundational element in his thinking. I argue

[49] It is quite notable and understandable that Spinoza defends the indivisibility of God's essence strongly (1p15sch; Ep12).

that becoming aware of this very essence of reality is also the final aim of the EIP. I claim that without God's unlimited power, he himself cannot exist, nor anything else and that nothing can be adequately known to be true with certainty.

2.4.2. The expression of God's essence

In Spinoza's system God's essence is expressed in his attributes, which constitute the divine nature (1def4; 1def6; 1p10sch). First and foremost, it is the absolutely infinite nature of God, i.e. God's very essence or power, which is expressed in the attributes. For Spinoza '…all the attributes are attributes of One infinite Being' (STapp2 S: 105).

Now each attribute does also have its own *way*[50]in which God's essence is expressed. Spinoza defines an attribute as '…that which the intellect perceives of substance as constituting its essence' (1def4) and also as '…whatever expresses essence…' (1def6expl). According to Ep9 the intellect '…attributes to substance a certain specific kind of nature' (S: 782). In the STapp2 Spinoza says that all attributes '…have also each its soul, just as in the case of extension' and in 1p10sch we read that each attribute expresses a '…definite essence, eternal and infinite'. How are things that *express essence*, such as extension and thought, conceived to be attributes of God? According to1def4, this is an intellectual insight and is not discernible by the senses. The intellect is seemingly able to adequately discern the common nature, essence or form of *extension* from its ideas of bodies and also that of *thought* from its perception of ideas.[51] How is this possible? For Spinoza this takes place necessarily because the ideas of the attributes are necessarily involved in all our ideas of things. Nothing can be conceived without the adequate ideas of God's attributes. When we form an idea of a body this must happen under the attribute of extension and when we form an idea of something mental this must be done under the attribute of thought. Another important element in this is that the intellect has innate ideas of God's attributes, which enables it to recognize and affirm those ideas that are common to all things. In Spinoza '…the human mind contains the nature of God within himself in concept and partakes thereof, and is thereby enabled to form certain basic ideas that explain natural phenomena and inculcate morality' (TTP1 S: 395). These true ideas of

[50] The view of an attribute as a *basic way of being* is suggested by Bennett (1984: 61).
[51] In the CM2/5 (S: 195) it seems as if Spinoza comes close to regarding the attributes as distinctions of reason, which is perhaps also found in 1def4.

the attributes are clear and distinct in the mind and from a consideration of the nature of these adequate ideas, it is concluded that such a divine simple nature necessarily exists outside the mind. This is quite a well-known argument in early modern rationalist thinking and is also found in Descartes. In the fifth meditation Descartes writes '… for it is obvious that whatever is true is something; and I have already amply demonstrated that everything of which I am clearly aware is true' (DSPW: 106). He continues a little further to say that such a true idea '…is not something fictitious which is dependent on my thought, but is an image of a true and immutable nature' (ibid.: 108).

It has been pointed out by Spinoza scholars (Curley and Wilson) that a plurality of attributes each possessing its own unique nature, which Spinoza appears to regard as substances in their own right (1p10), could pose a threat to his theory of a single substance and then also to the notion of essence monism, that I argue for.[52] This raises the question if there is something in Spinoza's philosophy that counters this possible threat against the unity of God's essence? Is there something to unify the infinity of attributes into the *One infinite Being* mentioned above? I suggest that the solution to this supposed difficulty could be found in the notion of essence monism. Although God's attributes do, in a sense, *really* differ from one another, they do all have something intrinsic in common in that God's eternal and infinite power is their *very essence*, which seems to be more fundamental and the same in all attributes. I argue that for Spinoza, God's very essence is his eternal and infinite power (1p34), which is attribute-neutral[53] and the inmost essence of all attributes and, in this sense, they all have the same very essence. In this view, God's power is conceived as a simple nature, which is expressed in all attributes and modes.[54] In the text, Spinoza does make a distinction between God, who is absolutely infinite and his attributes, which are only infinite in their kind (1def2; 1def6). This view is also found in 1p32dem, where he differentiates between God as an absolutely infinite substance and an attribute, which expresses the infinite and eternal essence in a certain way, such as thought. The important point is that *all* attributes express God's power and seeing that there are infinite attributes there is no limitation to God's power nor is there a threat

[52] See Nadler (2006: 70) for a discussion of this difficulty.
[53] The term *attribute-neutral* is also used by Schliesser (2011: 65), although in a somewhat different context.
[54] Spinoza's theory of modes will be discussed in the following section of this chapter and in greater detail in chapter three.

against the unity of God's essence. To reiterate this important point, God's very essence or power is expressed in infinite basic ways through the attributes and seeing that the essences and existence of modes are contained in God, all modes will, when conceived correctly, express God's essence in infinite ways in accordance with their own essence or perfection. Here we see the powerful notion of essence monism at work to unite the absolutely infinite Being, both ontologically and conceptually.

In summary, I argue that the notion of simplicity is applicable to God's power. For Marshall (2008: 70) the '…idea of a uniform, infinite power, for Spinoza, is a simple idea, one that is not composed of simpler ideas'. God's power is a simple nature or essence that really exists and is expressed in his attributes and in the essences and existence of modifications. Being completely simple in nature, God's power cannot be broken down into parts, which are simpler and is therefore incorruptible and eternal. In this view, Spinoza conceives God's power to be ontologically and conceptually simple. Seeing that the idea of God's power is necessarily simple it can only be conceived adequately. I contend that this notion of simplicity forms the important basis for his claim that we can have adequate knowledge of God's eternal and infinite essence (2p47). A further consequence is that the inmost essence of all of God's attributes will be simple and also their ideas, which in turn, secures the adequate conceivability of the attributes. Furthermore, God's power is expressed in the conatus or desire of all things to preserve and further their own being (1p36dem; 3p6). Being an expression of God's power is the inmost essence of all particular things and is what all things are in themselves. God's infinite power is the very essence of all things and all things express the very same essence, in proportion to their own perfection or individual natures. Seeing that God's power is simple, all expressions of his power must also be simple and I claim, therefore, that the conatus of all natural things should be understood to be a simple nature. The fact that God's power is expressed in accordance with something's particular nature does not, in my view, change or individuate God's power, which is simple and therefore immutable. Although the conatus of a particular horse or a woman may express God's power differently, the nature of the conatus of all things is the same, i.e. to persist in their being as best they can. In this sense, all things express the very same essence and have the same simple nature. Seeing that an infinite number of modes follow from infinite attributes, God's power is necessarily expressed in all possible ways and is not limited at all. Whereas finite things are determined to express God's essence in a

certain manner by other finite things (1p28), their inmost essence and their existence, i.e. their coming into and persisting in their existence (1p24cor), follows directly from Gods very essence or his power (2p45sch). Finally, as discussed earlier, Spinoza's theory of adequacy depends on our minds having adequate ideas of God's essence, which I understand to be ideas of the universal principles or laws of nature and their common properties. However, what could the ontological basis be for such fundamental principles or laws (such as the principle of sufficient reason), which prevent them from being mere entities of reason or the imagination? I claim that God's very essence or power, conceived as a simple nature, which is expressed in all such universal and fundamental laws or principles in nature and in our ideas of them, fulfills this role in Spinoza's thought.

2.4.3. Adequacy and finite modes

The focus thus far has been on Spinoza's idea of God's essence and on the important role that it plays in his epistemology and theory of adequate ideas. I argue that the adequate conceivability of God's essence forms the foundation for his project of emending the intellect. However, Spinoza's aim is not to only have adequate ideas of God, but to also conceive particular things adequately. As argued earlier, in accordance with Spinoza's method, modes are in something else and must therefore be conceived through something else (1def5). In Spinoza finite things can only be adequately conceived through our adequate ideas of God. This means that we must make use of our true ideas of God's essence in order to conceive finite things adequately. However, seeing that our adequate ideas of God's essence are of a universal or common nature (the ideas of extension, thought and the common notions), adequate knowledge of finite things will amount to the conception of the universal and fundamental aspects, which constitute all finite things. The unavoidable outcome of this method is that the individual aspects related to the durational existence of finite things will largely be squeezed out of the picture.[55] As is the case in

[55] This is not to say that the individual natures of particular things are not important in Spinoza and for the EIP. Much important work has recently been done to bolster the apparent rather weak ontological status of particular things in Spinoza's philosophy. I refer here to the work of Martin (2008), Garrett (2009), Melamed (2010) and Viljanen (2011) with regard to Spinoza's use of the notions of formal and actual essence in his theory of individuation. In the following chapter I argue for the importance of a stable basis for individuation for Spinoza's EIP. I claim that the mind's ability to have some adequate

Descartes, Spinoza's rationalist method aims at adequately conceiving that which is common and timeless in all finite things. As discussed earlier in this chapter, Spinoza's EIP is therefore not aimed at acquiring complete knowledge pertaining to the durational existence of finite things.[56] For Spinoza an infinite chain of finite natural causes is involved in the certain manner in which finite things are determined to exist, the comprehension of which is beyond the ability of a finite mind. Spinoza's rationalist aim is not to pursue adequate knowledge of the durational existence of finite things, but rather, to conceive their essence adequately.[57] In Spinoza's terminology, we can have adequate knowledge of finite things only insofar as they are conceived to be modes or expressions of God's essence. For example:

> Particular things are nothing but affections of the attributes of God, that is, modes wherein the attributes of God find expression in a definite and determinate way. (1p25cor.)

As is apparent in the above citation, Spinoza's method of conceiving finite things adequately as modes of the attributes, does not explicate the certain manner in which finite things exist. An adequate conception of finite things in Spinoza aspires to conceive them as expressions of God's essence, which is to conceive their simple and common features. To briefly restate, as argued earlier in this chapter, Spinoza deems it possible for a finite mind to have adequate ideas of God's essence. Such ideas are of God's essence as expressed in the attributes and in the immediate infinite modes, which inhere in God. Our adequate ideas, for Spinoza, then amount to the ideas of extension and thought and the common ideas or notions pertaining to the fundamental laws of physics and psychology. The reason for such ideas being adequate in the mind is that they are necessarily involved in the forming of all our ideas and are therefore wholly contained in all finite minds. These are the ideas of the attributes and common aspects or properties that are always present in bodies and minds and their affections

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idea of *itself*, depends largely on the individual nature of the body of which it is the idea. It is however not necessary for my purposes to discuss the importance of attributing essences to individuals in further detail.

[56] Spinoza readily admits this and does not claim to have comprehensive knowledge of the durational existence of particular things (TdIE§100, 101; 1p33sch1; TTP4 S: 427; Ep 30; Ep 32).

[57] Towards the end of his life Spinoza was questioned by Tschirnhaus how he conceived that a 'variety of things' could follow from the notion of extension alone (Ep82, 83). In his reply Spinoza writes that he had 'not yet had the opportunity to arrange in due order anything on this subject.' To me this is an indication that adequate knowledge of durational existence was not the focal point of his philosophy.

and are therefore always present in our ideas of bodies and minds and their affections. In Spinoza, the ideas of the intellect or reason necessarily explicate that which is common to all things:

> Therefore, it is in the nature of reason to regard things in this light of eternity. Furthermore, the basic principles of reason are those notions (2p38), which explicate what is common to all things, and do not explicate (2p37) the essence of any particular thing, and therefore must be conceived without any relation to time, but in the light of eternity. (2p44cor2dem.)

In Spinoza there are two ways of conceiving particular finite things. They can either be perceived superficially or abstractly through our sensory ideas or they can be conceived adequately, by reason or the intellect (5p29sch; Ep12). Whereas sensory ideas perceive finite things under a form of duration, the intellect conceives them under a form of eternity (TdIE§108). Sensory ideas relate to the particular durational, time and place, existence of finite things, i.e. to the *certain manner* (2p45sch) in which such things exist. In contrast, the intellect conceives the eternal and infinite essence of God, which finite things express (2p44cor2dem; 2p47dem). When particular things are conceived in this second way, they are conceived as modes of God's essence in which the attributes of God find expression in a definite and determinate way (1p25cor). This second way of conceiving finite things, in the light of eternity or *sub quadam specie aeternitatis* (2p44cor2), produces adequate knowledge of them, i.e. of their essence.

However, Spinoza does not regard sensory ideas as worthless and, as seen, perceiving things in this way is not completely false. However, even though sense perception is a normal way for us to form ideas and beliefs, it does not produce adequate knowledge of the inmost essence of finite things. The latter refers to God's essence, without which nothing can be or be conceived (1p15). For Spinoza, we cannot understand the durational realm of Natura naturata adequately through the senses alone:

> Nor again can the Modes of substance ever be correctly understood if they are confused with such mental constructs (entia rationis) or aids to the imagination. For by so doing we are separating them from Substance and from the manner of

> their efflux from Eternity, and in such isolation they can never be correctly understood. (Ep12 S: 789.)

For Spinoza, the *aids to the imagination*, referred to above, are sensory notions such as time, place, measure and number, which are used to:

> …delimit Duration and Quantity as we please, conceiving Quantity in abstraction from Substance and separating the efflux of Duration from things eternal, there arise Time and Measure: Time to delimit Duration and Measure to delimit Quantity in such wise that enables us to imagine them easily as far as possible. Again from the fact that we separate the affections of Substance from Substance itself, and arrange them in classes so that we can easily imagine them as far as possible, there arises Number, whereby we delimit them. Hence it can clearly be seen that Measure, Time and Number are nothing other than modes of thinking, or rather, modes of imagining. (Ibid.)

In Spinoza's view, 'there are many things that can in no way be apprehended by the imagination but only by the intellect, such as Substance, Eternity and other things' (ibid.). Our sensory ideas are unable to grasp the universal aspects, which constitute all things and are inclined to perceive finite things superficially as really distinct individual things, which exist by their own power.[58] The following citation is a striking formulation of the mentioned two ways of conceiving the corporeal world:

> So if we have regard to quantity as it exists in the imagination (and this is what we most frequently and readily do), it will be found to be divisible, finite, composed of parts, and manifold. But if we have regard to it as it is in the intellect and we apprehend the thing as it is in itself (and this is very difficult), then it is found to be infinite indivisible, and one alone, as I have already sufficiently proved. (Ibid.)

[58] I understand Spinoza to employ the theory of concurrence in his philosophy, that finite things are dependent on God for both their essence and existence. I will argue later that, although this is proven beyond doubt by reason in the first part of the *Ethics*, it is only by intuition that we can experience this to be certainly true, i.e. that particular things are *in* God (2p45sch). Texts that support this most important of the notion of concurrence in Spinoza's thought are: CM2/1 (S: 191); CM2/7 (S: 199); CM2/10 (S: 204); CM2/11 (S: 207); 1p24cor; 2p45sch; 5p36sch; TTP3 (S: 417); TP2 (S: 683).

When perceived by the senses, corporeal nature is seen as consisting of quite different separate finite things. For the rationalist minded Spinoza this is a legitimate albeit inadequate understanding of things. When adequately conceived by reason, which disregards all particular aspects of bodies, corporeality is found to be essentially one.[59] The above citation from Ep12, which is very similar to 1p15sch, refers to Spinoza's second way of conceiving finite things, in which the intellect employs its adequate ideas to conceive the essence of the corporeal world. When conceived in this way by reason, particular things are conceived in the light of eternity, which involves the idea of God's eternal and infinite essence. This *second* intellectual way conceives the eternal and universal aspects of things. For example, when particular bodies are conceived in the light of eternity, the focus is not on the actual nature of any particular one, but shifts to that which all bodies have in common with one another. Such common notions or ideas of bodies are, for example that all finite bodies 'involve the conception of one and the same attribute' and that 'they may move at varying speeds, and may be absolutely in motion or at rest' (2p13lem2dem) or that bodies are 'nothing else than a certain proportion of motion and rest' (STapp2 S: 106). To this can be added the adequate idea of God's essence or power, which is the conatus of all bodies to persist in their own being (3p6). The EIP aims to conceive the eternal, universal and timeless aspects of our world. Spinoza's core insight is that although

[59] Spinoza's method of acquiring adequate knowledge is grounded in the adequate conceivability of the idea of God. In Spinoza we can only have adequate ideas of God's essence and of that which follows immediately from God. The EIP is primarily aimed at uncovering the divine decrees or universal principles and laws that govern our universe. I have argued that this method does leave adequate knowledge of the durational existence of particular things largely out of the picture. As shown, although our adequate ideas are necessarily involved in our sensory knowledge of finite durational things, this kind of knowledge will always be incomplete and imaginative. The harsher point that I make here is that, in the rationalist approach of Descartes and Spinoza, our ideas reflect much about the ontological reality of their objects (TdIE§108). Inadequate ideas reflect that the ontological reality of finite durational things, of which they are ideas, is rather weak. The possibility of perceiving finite things as individual entities, which exist in a certain manner, seems to necessitate the use of sensory notions such as time, measure and number and this way of perceiving is seen by Spinoza to be abstract and superficial. This view could suggest that Spinoza considers the durational realm of finite things as illusionary. Schliesser (2011: 76-80) argues that 'according to Spinoza there 'are' finite modes if and only if there is imaginative conceiving. That is to say, imaginative conceiving and modes are co-constitutive'. In Schliesser's view, for Spinoza, the 'striving and reality of finite things is in some important sense illusionary.' I agree that Spinoza does seem to assign a lower level of reality to durational things and does employ a rather weak notion of individuality in the Natura naturata. However, I agree with Youpa (2011: 328-9) that this does not commit Spinoza to view the realm of duration as illusionary or that he holds an a-cosmist view. As argued there is an adequate component to sense perception in that our adequate ideas (which do relate to the reality of God's essence) are necessarily employed when forming sensory ideas. The notion of essence monism that I argue for should not be seen to completely eliminate individuality in Natura naturata. To the contrary, without God's essence nothing could be or be conceived. I argue later, some notion of individuality, albeit not clear and distinct, is needed for Spinoza's EIP.

finite things are determined to exist in a certain manner by other finite things, their inmost essence (simple nature) and their existence follows from the eternal and infinite essence or power of God. When we conceive particular things in this light of God's essence, we conceive the very nature of their existence, i.e. that they are in God (2p45sch).

2.5. Ethics and certitude

There is consensus amongst most scholars that Spinoza's philosophy has an ethical intention.[60] Spinoza seems to have even regarded ethics to be the final goal of philosophy itself (Aalderdink 1999: 68). In this regard his philosophy has a somewhat different focus to that of Descartes, which, although containing a rich ethics,[61] seems to lack a fully developed ethical theory.[62] In his *Discourse on Method*, Descartes formulates a moral code consisting of a few maxims. His third maxim is actually quite similar to a line of thinking found in Spinoza's writings (my emphasis):

> My third maxim was to always try to master myself rather than fortune, and change my desires rather than the order of the world. *In general I would become accustomed to believing that nothing lies entirely within our power except our thoughts*, so that after doing our best in dealing with matters external to us, whatever we fail to achieve is absolutely impossible so far as we are concerned. (CSM I: 123.)

[60] For Koistinen (Forthcoming: 1) it should not come as a surprise that the aim of Spinoza's Ethics is ethical. He says that 'Spinoza provides the reader with a fully developed ethical theory which consists of a critique of objective intrinsic values, of a naturalistic normative ethics, and of ways to improve us so that we could live up to requirements of that ethics.' Koistinen continues and says that Spinoza's ethical theory is backed by a solid metaphysics and states that Spinoza even goes so far as to see the right ethics as deductively following from the metaphysics.

[61] According to Shapiro (2008: 445) 'While Descartes's writings do not include any systematic and definitive presentation of this area of philosophy, his writings *are* permeated with a concern for the conduct of life, and they do include some developed pieces that can guide us as we try to figure out just in what Descartes's moral philosophy consists.' In her opinion Descartes's writings show he is best understood as a kind of virtue ethicist. A virtue ethics takes the good to consist in virtue; which is to act in the right way under the guidance of reason in any given set of circumstances.

[62] Van Ruler (1999: 89-101) points out that some Dutch Cartesian theologians, such as Cornelius Bontekoe (1644-1685) thought that Descartes's philosophy lacked an ethical theory. There seems to have been quite a strong intention in the Cartesian circles of the Leiden University to try to fill this gap. It is thought that the Leiden theologian Abraham Heidanus had some intention that the Ethics of Arnold Geulincx (1624-1669) could be a candidate to fill the gap. Van Ruler speculates quite interestingly, but not conclusively, on the possible influences between Geulinx and Spinoza, who were contemporaries and both linked to the Leiden University. Geulincx's Ethics was published before Spinoza's in 1675 and the similarities between the two works have been widely recognized.

The similarity between these thoughts and Spinoza's in 4app32 is indeed quite striking:

> However, we shall patiently bear whatever happens to us that is contrary to what is required by consideration of our own advantage if we are conscious that we have done our duty and that our power was not extensive enough for us to have avoided the said things and that we are a part of the whole of nature whose order we follow. If we clearly and distinctly understand this, that part of us which is defined by the understanding, that is, the better part of us, will be fully resigned and will endeavor to persist in that resignation. And insofar as we rightly understand these matters, the endeavor of the better part of us is in harmony with the order of the whole of Nature.

Note, in the above, the importance assigned by Descartes and Spinoza to the role of the mind in early rationalist ethical thinking. Spinoza's ethical aim is clear from the outset in his writings. In the opening passages of the early TdIE he writes:

> I resolved at length to enquire whether there existed a true good, one which was capable of communicating itself and could alone affect the mind to the exclusion of all else, whether in fact, there was something whose discovery and acquisition would afford me a continuous and supreme joy to all eternity. (TdIE§1.)

It is notable that Spinoza's *Short Treatise on God, Man, and his Well – Being* is described as an *Ethica or Moral Science* (S: 34). The first title page of this treatise, which was most likely composed by Spinoza's publisher friends, gives a clear indication of the ethical intention of Spinoza's philosophy (my emphasis):

> Previously written in the Latin tongue by B.D.S. *for the use of his disciples who wanted to devote themselves to the study of Ethics and true Philosophy*. And now translated into the Dutch language for the use of Lovers of the Truth and Virtue: so that they who spout so much about it, and put their dirt and filth into the hands of simpletons as though it were ambergris, may just have their

> mouths stopped, and cease to profane what they do not understand: God, themselves, *and how to help people to have regard for each other's well – being, and how to heal those whose mind is sick*, in a spirit of tenderness and tolerance, after the example of the Lord Christ, our best Teacher.

The undertaking by Spinoza to develop an ethical theory on the basis of philosophical reason alone was extremely radical in early modern times, seeing that most things pertaining to human morality and destiny was still firmly under the control of the Church.[63] By taking this step, Spinoza moved quite boldly away from the view of philosophy as the handmaiden of theology and the Church. With Spinoza's work, ethics takes a decisive step forward in becoming an independent scientific endeavor based on reason alone. [64]

An important question is how the ethical intention of Spinoza's philosophy lines up with his task of emending the intellect, which seems to be more of an epistemological project. One of the most striking aspects of Spinoza's approach to an ethical theory is the close connection that he forges between ethics and knowledge. The following short citations, taken from his early and mature works, indicate that this close relation is an essential feature of his thought, especially the important theme of attaining peace of mind or self-contentment:

> Therefore, this doctrine, apart from giving us complete tranquility of mind, has the further advantage of teaching us wherein lies our greater happiness or blessedness, namely in the knowledge of God alone, as a result of which we are induced only to such actions as are urged on us by love and piety. (2p49sch.)

> Self-contentment (acquiescentia in se ipso) can arise from reason, and only that self-contentment which arises from reason is the highest there can be. (4p52.)

[63] This could have been a contributing factor in Descartes not developing a complete ethics. He did not, seemingly, want to trespass onto the accepted domain of the Churches. Descartes was quite hesitant in applying his method of methodical doubt to the knowledge of God's nature and the destiny of man. His main focus was on having clear and distinct knowledge of the natural world.

[64] For Toulmin, practical ethics took second place in early modern thinking. As he says: 'Rather than pursue the minutiae of moral practice, philosophers concentrated on clarifying and distinguishing the concepts of ethics, and formulating the universal, timeless axioms that (for a rationalist) must lie at the base of any 'rational' system of ethics' (1990: 76).

> And since true salvation and blessedness consist in true contentment of mind and we find our true peace only in what we clearly understand, (TTP7 S: 467.)

One of the most important recurring themes in Spinoza's thought is that eternal joy[65] and self-contentment follow from adequate knowledge of God's essence. In his view, the primary source of human discontent is inadequate knowledge, which leads to the passions. He writes in this regard that: 'blessedness is nothing other than that self-contentment that arises from the intuitive knowledge of God' (4app4). I argue that the ethical intention of Spinoza's philosophy coincides with his epistemological goal of achieving the highest form of knowledge. In Spinoza the relation between discovering contentment, finding joy and knowing God is very intimate and we find peace of mind by conceiving the true idea of God's essence. For Spinoza, at bottom, God and adequate knowledge are, in a sense, the same:

> But the third is God, or, what we regard as one and the same, *Truth.* (ST2/5 S: 68.)

The discovery of the true idea of God is nothing less than uniting intellectually with God. This is the highest form of knowledge or the *amor dei intellectualis* which leads to eternal peace of mind and joy (5p32). In Spinoza, our highest perfection and good as humans is the joy of knowing with certainty that we are eternally united with God. In Spinoza this is possible in that our intellect is involved in God's intellect and possesses the true idea of God.

However, as said earlier, Spinoza and other early modern thinkers viewed the human mind to be suffering from a serious mental ailment and that it had somehow lost its way and no longer related to its own innate and natural ability to have adequate ideas. The task of emending the intellect is not easy and is a difficult and enduring struggle, involving both mind and body (5p42sch). The denial of the human mind's innate ability to know the truth was one of the main instruments used by the Church to place and hold mankind in bondage (TTPpref). For Spinoza, this slavery or bondage of the mind could only be overcome by means of the demanding process of

[65] This close connection between joy and the mind is clearly Stoic and this notion is also found in Descartes (Curley 1988: 88). See also Susan James (1993) who has done much work on showing some important similarities between Spinoza and the Stoics.

emending the intellect. Spinoza's ethical theory, which is closely linked to the discovery of the highest form of knowledge, includes the difficult process of emending the intellect.[66] I contend that the *emendation of the intellect* is one of the most important themes in his philosophy and is present in all his writings.[67] All Spinoza's efforts seem to be directed at bringing the EIP to a successful conclusion.

An important question is why should the arduous task of emending our intellect be undertaken at all? An important proposition in this regard is (4p36):

> The highest good of those who pursue virtue is common to all, and all can equally enjoy it.

In 4p36dem Spinoza adds:

> To act from virtue is to act by the guidance of reason (4p24), and whatever we endeavor to do in accordance with reason is to understand (4p26). So (4p28) the highest good of those who pursue virtue is to know God; that is (2p47 and 2p47sch) a good that is common to all men and can be possessed equally by all men insofar as they are of the same nature.

I argue that Spinoza deems it possible for all humans to live by the guidance of reason, to successfully undertake the EIP and to discover and enjoy our highest good. This optimism, I argue, is grounded in his rationalist conviction that the human mind has the idea of God innately. I will contend later that our intellect is involved in God's intellect, which follows directly from the attribute of thought and has both the power

[66] A suitable English term for the Latin term 'emendatione' has been somewhat of a discussion point in Spinoza literature in the past (Joachim 1940:1). The term *emendation* of the intellect can be understood to include the notions of perfecting, developing or improving it. One of the possible meanings of this term is that of purifying. Emending the intellect would then involve its purification to reveal its pure nature. The project would, in part, involve identifying and ridding the mind of the somewhat *sick* and infectious ideas of the imagination that find their way into the human mind and obscure its true nature. Spinoza seems to understand emendation in this way: 'But our first consideration must be to devise a method of emending the intellect and of purifying it, as far as possible, so that it may succeed in understanding things without error and as well as possible' (TdIE§16). See also Eisenberg (1971) for an interesting discussion of this subject.

[67] The theme of emending the intellect runs through Spinoza's entire body of work. For example in the Ethics in 4app4: 'Therefore it is of the first importance in life to perfect the intellect, or reason, as far as we can, and the highest happiness or blessedness for mankind consists in this alone.' In the TTP4 we find the following: 'Since our intellect forms the better part of us, it is evident that, if we wish to seek what is definitely to our advantage, we should endeavor above all to perfect it as far as we can, for in its perfection must consist our supreme good' (S: 427).

and the true ideas to think adequately. The same reasoning is found in the TTP where Spinoza says that the knowledge and love of God is of universal application and common to all of mankind because it is deduced from human nature as such (TTP4 S: 429). For Spinoza our highest *human perfection* is closely associated with the mind, which has the idea of God innately and is able to be active. It seems then that, for Spinoza, humans are able to emend their intellect, but what claim does he have on us to undertake his demanding EIP? In other words, why should we do this? Seeing that Spinoza, in my view, discards any notion of Aristotelian substantial forms, there is also no human or individual essence against which we can be measured. Spinoza seems to teach that we can live as we please and that it is our natural right and also in accordance with our very essence, i.e. the conatus, to preserve our wellbeing in any way we are able or see fit:

> Desire is the very essence of man insofar as his essence is conceived as determined to any action from any given affection of itself. (Def. of Emotions 1.)

Is Spinoza's EIP perhaps aimed at only intellectuals, who for some personal reason, wish to develop their intellect? Spinoza does seem to be thinking along these lines in the last passages of his preface to the TTP:

> Such, learned reader, are the topics which I here submit for your consideration…To others I seek not to commend this treatise, for I have no reason to expect them to approve it in any way. I know how deeply rooted in the mind are prejudices embraced under the guise of piety. I know, too, that the masses can no more be freed from their superstition than from their fears. Finally, I know that they are unchanging in their obstinacy, that they are not guided by reason, and that their praise and blame is at the mercy of impulse. Therefore I do not invite the common people to read this work, nor all those who are victims of the same emotional attitudes. Indeed, I would prefer that they disregard this book completely rather than make themselves a nuisance by misinterpreting it after their wont. (S: 393.)

These are indeed strong words that cause us to question whether the EIP is indeed important for Spinoza. Nevertheless, Spinoza does also clearly hold that not only is the development of reason the best way for humans to preserve and further their well being, but that we are under a *divine* obligation to do so and that our human salvation and blessedness, depends on it (TTP4 S: 429). This notion of a divine law or obligation, in Spinoza, refers to the innate idea of God or the intellect, which, as I will argue later, possesses the adequate idea of God's essence that is needed for us to find contentment and happiness. In a moral sense, for Spinoza, our highest good is seated in the mind. Viewed in this way, the obligation to undertake the EIP is then dictated to us by our intellect, which is the highest possible expression of our power. For Spinoza, the emendation of the intellect is therefore a project that should be undertaken by all human beings for the furtherance and perfection of our own wellbeing. This demand is in accordance with the conatus of all things to further their well being to the utmost level of their perfection.

The purpose of this second section of this chapter was to establish the ethical nature of the EIP and the central role that the EIP plays in Spinoza's whole philosophical undertaking. I started by firstly establishing that Spinoza regards ethics to be a central aim of his philosophy. Secondly the close link between ethics and certitude is indicated and thirdly that the true knowledge of things entails a process of emending the intellect which demands nothing less than the development and transformation of man's basic striving nature into that of a rational being. The successful achievement of the EIP is the highest form of human perfection and is mankind's *summum bonum*. Although this process is an extremely challenging undertaking it is nevertheless seen to be a divine law pertaining to the whole of mankind.

3. Mind, Body and Essence

I argue in this work that the rationalist thought of Descartes and Spinoza is best understood against the background of the seventeenth-century pursuit of epistemological certitude. The response to this challenge came in the form of an innovation in their epistemology that is based on attaining adequate knowledge of the essence of things. Their basic method is to firstly intuit the true ideas of God's essence and to secondly, infer other true ideas of the essences of all things from these foundational ideas. In Spinoza, from the adequate idea of God's very essence as power, the universal nature or conatus of all things can be inferred as the endeavor to persist in their being as far as possible (3p7). Spinoza appears then to have conceived God's essence and that of all things adequately and to have reached his philosophical goal.

Strangely enough, this is not the case and this result, albeit very important, is not the final goal of his task of emending the intellect. For Spinoza the notion of striving alone, which does adequately depict the way in which bodies and minds act, does not express the highest form of human power. As stated earlier, Spinoza also uses the notion of essence in a moral sense of our highest good or perfection,[68] which he associates with being self-content:

[68] The idea of striving towards perfection includes some notion of having a final goal or an end in mind, which seems to run up against Spinoza's view that the idea of final causes is deeply misguided and imaginary. Carriero goes so far as to say that one of Spinoza's main aims is to eliminate all notions of final causation from the universe (2005: 106). Can Spinoza's EIP be understood without the notion of a final cause? In my view, Spinoza's EIP does not employ any notion of a natural inclination or essence in humans that directs us towards the goal of becoming rational. When Spinoza says that 'man thinks' (2ax1), this is not to say that he deems man to have a *rational* nature. For Spinoza we must learn how to use reason aright, which has much to do with becoming self-determined. That the essence of man, for Spinoza, is constituted by modes of thinking (2p11dem) means only that humans naturally form and employ ideas. Spinoza's method of emending the intellect is based on understanding the nature of our ideas, distinguishing between our inadequate and adequate ones and following the latter. The aim is to progress from living passively under the influence of our inadequate ideas and the ensuing passions, towards actively following the dictates or ideas of reason. Whereas our incomplete sensory ideas restrict the mind's affirming conatus (which leads to pain), we experience pleasure when the mind is unchecked by its adequate ideas and consents fully to them. That which leads us *forward* in the EIP is not the notion of an *end*, but rather the active emotion of joy and self-contentment of the mind, which follows from acquiring adequate ideas. This process is, I argue, not driven by any natural bent to live in accordance with reason and should be understood as largely 'blind' (ibid.: 121). The EIP is a human endeavor for intellectual perfection that is successfully achieved by adequately conceiving the most perfect idea, that of God. The EIP is a constant hard struggle to overcome the passions that threaten to hold us captive in a life of bondage to inadequate ideas.

> Self-contentment (acquiescentia in se ipso) can arise from reason, and only that self-contentment which arises from reason is the highest there can be. (4p52.)
>
> On the other hand the wise man, insofar as he is considered as such, suffers scarcely any disturbance of spirit, but being conscious, by virtue of an eternal necessity, of himself, of God and of things, never ceases to be, but always possesses true spiritual contentment. (5p42sch.)

For the rationalist minded Spinoza, the *acquiescentia in se ipso* comes about when we live in accordance with reason. This sense of self-contentment is also the highest expression of human activity and it is for this reason that the emendation of our intellect is of the highest importance for our wellbeing. For Spinoza, 'it is of the first importance in life to perfect the intellect, or reason, as far as we can, and the highest happiness or blessedness for mankind consists in this alone' (4app4). Living in accordance with reason, which he sees to be our *better part*, amounts to being self-determined and therefore also self-content.

But why is the above the case? Are we not a union of mind and body and why should the mind have preference with regard to the question of human perfection? Spinoza attends to this matter in the opening paragraphs of the appendix to the fourth part of the *Ethics*:

> 1. All our endeavors or desires follow from the necessity of our nature in such a way that they can be understood either through it alone as their approximate cause, or insofar as we are a part of Nature, a part that cannot be adequately conceived through itself independently of the other individual parts.
> 2. Desires that follow from our nature in such a way that they can be understood through it alone are those that are related to the mind insofar as the mind is conceived of consisting of adequate ideas. The other desires are related to the mind only insofar as it conceives things inadequately; and their force and increase must be defined not by human power but by the things external to us. So the former are rightly called active emotions, the latter passive emotions. For the former always indicate our power, the latter our weakness and fragmentary knowledge.

For Spinoza, all our endeavors stem from two basic sources, either from our *own* nature (adequate ideas) or from the fact that we are an inextricable *part* of nature (inadequate ideas). Desires that are associated with our *own* nature are related to our adequate ideas, which enable us to think and to act adequately. Desires that follow from the fact that we are a *part* of nature are related to the inadequate sensory ideas, which stem from external affections received due to the body being continuously exposed to and influenced by external forces.[69]

In this third chapter I will show why the intellect is regarded by Spinoza to be the locus of our self-determination and contentment and not our sensory knowledge, which is related to the body. To understand this more fully, we need to explain the basic difference between the nature of the mind and that of the body. I claim that Spinoza regards a part of human mind, the intellect, to be active, whereas the other part of the mind, the imagination, which is associated with the body, is seen to be passive. I will firstly consider Spinoza's theory of the mind and secondly that of the body.

3.1. Mind

3.1.1. The essence of thought

I argued in the previous chapter that God's very essence, i.e. his eternal and infinite power, is expressed in his attributes, which are basic ways in which the divine essence is manifested. The attribute of thought is an eternal and infinite expression of God's power in thought, to which Spinoza also refers as *absolute thought* (1p31dem). In this section I will attempt to clarify what the essence of thought amounts to in his theory of mind.

Firstly, the *essence* of thought in Spinoza is not itself an idea, nor is it constituted by ideas. The attribute or essence of thought is not a compositional entity at all, in my view (1p13). I claim that the essence of thought is completely simple in nature. Ideas or minds are *modes* of thought, which follow from or are caused by the *essence* of

[69] We find a very similar line of thinking in the TdIE§84: 'Thus we have distinguished between the true ideas and other perceptions, and we have established that the fictitious, the false, and other ideas have their origin in the imagination, that is, in certain sensations that are fortuitous and unconnected, arising not from the power of the mind but from external causes, in accordance as the body, dreaming or waking, receives various motions'.

thought and come to pass when their objects actually exist.[70] Spinoza makes an important ontological distinction between the attribute or essence of thought and the modes of thinking that are caused by and inhere in the former:

> As regards the Understanding in the thinking thing, this, like the first is also a Son, Product, or immediate creation of God, also created by him from all eternity, and remaining immutable to all eternity. It has but one function, namely to understand clearly and distinctly all things at all times; which produces invariably an infinite or most perfect satisfaction, which cannot omit to do what it does. (ST1/8,9 S: 58,9.)

The *understanding*, mentioned in the citation above, refers to the infinite intellect, which is the immediate infinite mode of thought, created and sustained by God and situated in the durational realm of Natura naturata, where there are objects to think about. As suggested above, by being a mode, the infinite intellect is essentially different to its attribute. The most important difference being that the infinite intellect is a mode of thought and its essence does therefore not involve existence (1p24). Spinoza holds the same theory in this regard in the *Ethics*:

> By intellect (as is self-evident) we do not understand absolute thought but only a definite mode of thinking which differs from other modes such as desire, love, etc., and so (1def5) must be conceived through absolute thought – that is (1p15; 1def6), an attribute of God which expresses the eternal and infinite essence of

[70] For Spinoza, a finite mode of thought, such as a particular human mind, cannot exist prior to the existence of its body in nature (2p11dem). Spinoza does however say that the ideas of non existing individual things must be comprehended in the infinite idea of God in the same way as the formal essences of particular things are contained in the God's attributes (2p8). In my view, the comprehension of singular ideas in God's intellect and the containment of particular things in the attributes should not suggest any *real* distinctions in the divine essence, which is completely simple by nature. Spinoza attends to this matter in the *Short Treatise* and in the *Ethics* (1p8sch; 2p8). In the *Short Treatise* all modes '…even when none of them exists, are nevertheless equally comprehended in their attributes; and as there is no inequality whatever in the attributes, nor yet in the essences of the modes, there can be no particularity in the idea when there is none in Nature' (app2 S: 105,6). In 2p8, with its subsections, Spinoza employs an example from geometry to further illustrate how finite modes are contained in the attributes. In my view, his view here is much the same as that found in the *Short Treatise*. Nevertheless, certain scholars find in 2p8 a development in Spinoza's view on the attribute/mode ontology and see it as an attempt on his part to strengthen the ontological status of finite modes. See Jarrett (1990: 162); Martin (2008: 489) and Viljanen (Forthcoming). As said, I do agree that Spinoza's EIP requires the individual natures of bodies to have a stable ontological basis. However this is done, it should not come at the expense of the simplicity of God's essence, in my view.

> thought – in such a way that without this attribute it can neither be nor be conceived; and therefore must be related to *Natura naturata*, not to *Natura naturans*, just like the other modes of thinking. (1p31dem.)

It is quite notable that Spinoza even denies that God, strictly speaking, has an intellect at all:

> If intellect and will do indeed pertain to the eternal essence of God, one must understand in the case of both these attributes something very different from the meaning widely entertained. For the intellect and will that would constitute the essence of God would have to be vastly different from human intellect and will, and would have no point of agreement except the name. They could be no more alike than the celestial constellation of the Dog and the dog that barks. (1p17sch.)

In 1p17, cited above, Spinoza is mainly considering God as an absolutely infinite substance, that is, as a *free cause*. In this respect God's power, will and intellect are understood to be one and the same (CM2/7,8). Conceived as a free cause, there seems to be no place in God for any deliberation or reasoning, as suggests some lack or shortcoming, which cannot be in God. Spinoza's God is in himself and conceives himself and has perfect and immediate clarity of his essence. Any suggestion that God first thinks and plans his creation and thereafter sets about producing it would be, for Spinoza, a typical example of the anthropomorphism, which he strongly dismisses. For Spinoza, all is perfectly comprehended and contained in God and follows solely from the necessity of God's essence (1p17; 1p33dem). This outcome is no different to the basic picture of the metaphysical structure of Spinoza's system argued for thus far. With regard to the attribute of thought, Spinoza maintains the ontological distinction between substance or God and modes. This refers to the distinction between the essence of thought and the modes of thought that follow from it. The important distinction in Spinoza between the *active naturing* essence of God (Natura naturans) and the *dependent natured* modes (Natura naturata) echoes the ontological distinction mentioned above. Now the infinite intellect or God's intellect is the first or immediate infinite mode of thought that follows from absolute thought and is itself eternal, simple, immutable and indivisible, by virtue of the cause in which it inheres.

The infinite intellect cannot be or be conceived without the eternal and infinite power or very essence of thought. The first point then, with regard to the essence of thought, is that it is not itself an idea of something and should be clearly distinguished from its modes.

3.1.2. Affirmation

It is however not immediately clear how the essence of thought expresses God's eternal and infinite power and this needs further clarification. I have shown that in Spinoza's rationalist thinking, God's power, will and intellect are regarded as one and the same. I argue that this view leads to a very close association between the notions of affirmation and thought in his theory of mind. For Spinoza we cannot have an idea of something without affirming it and we cannot affirm something without having an idea of it (2p49dem). For example, we cannot affirm certain properties of a triangle without having a true idea of a triangle. In Spinoza, the affirmation of something always involves the conception or idea of the thing. For Spinoza, to will or to affirm some thing is nothing other than having its idea and he concludes that all ideas are, in essence, *affirmations* of their objects. This essence of thought as affirmation appears to be grounded in God's affirmation or idea of his essence. Since there is no privation in God there is nothing in his essence or in that which follows from it that he denies or negates. In God there is only a positive affirmation of or love[71] for his own perfect being, i.e., of his essence and existence and all that ensues from it. I argue that affirmation is the eternal and infinite essence of thought and that all modes of thought (ideas) will necessarily express this essence. The conatus of any idea is therefore the striving to affirm, to love or, which is the same, to understand the object of which it is the idea.[72] As suggested above, all ideas are positive affirmations of their objects,

[71] The notion of affirmation or love as the essence of thought is important in Spinoza and is especially apparent in his *Short Treatise* (ST2/22 S: 93-95). See in this regard also CM2/8: 'We do not know how God's essence, his intellect by which he understands himself, and his will by which he loves himself, are distinguished. God's will, by which he wills to love himself, follows necessarily from his infinite intellect, by which he understands himself' (S: 200). The notion of love seems to play an important role in Spinoza's theory of the union between mind and body, which will be discussed in more detail shortly.

[72] See Della Rocca (2003) and Steinberg (2005) for an interesting discussion of Spinoza's theory of affirmation in ideas. Della Rocca suggests that this theory commits Spinoza to accept that all ideas are beliefs. Steinberg thinks that Spinoza employs some notion of degree with regard to beliefs. In my view all ideas are affirmations, but all ideas will not have the same level of certainty or belief. As argued, certainty depends on the nature of the object of an idea.

even in the case of inadequate sensory ideas. In this respect all ideas have the same essence, that of affirmation. In Spinoza, falsity and uncertainty in an idea stems from the complex and obscure nature of the object that is cognized and not from a lack of affirmation. True and false ideas are distinguished from one another through certainty or uncertainty. In a true idea there is complete agreement or affirmation between the idea and its object or *ideatum* and this results in a complete or adequate understanding of the object, from which certainty follows. As argued earlier, in Spinoza, adequate ideas can only be acquired of God's essence. Although a false perception will also positively strive to affirm its object as far as it can, like the boy imagining a winged horse and affirming its wings, there will no be certainty about this (2p49sch).[73] In Spinoza then, thought is conceived to be an eternal and infinite intellectual essence or thinking force that strives to affirm or to understand its object. I argue that *affirmation* is the essence of thought and is necessarily common to all ideas (even our sensory ideas) and must be in every single idea and the same in all. The essence of thought is therefore simple in nature.

3.1.3. God's infinite intellect

However, in order to affirm or understand something, conceptualization and thinking is required. Because the forming of ideas and reasoning is not applicable to God, Spinoza situates this activity in the realm of Natura naturata, in God's infinite intellect. In Spinoza's system, the immediate infinite mode of thinking that follows from the attribute of thought is God's infinite intellect (1p30dem; 2p4dem; Ep64). The essence of thought (affirmation) will necessarily be involved and expressed in this infinite mode of thinking, which purpose is to conceive God's essence and all that follows from it adequately:

> Therefore, the finite intellect in act or the infinite intellect in act must comprehend the attributes of God and the affections of God and nothing else. (1p30dem.)

[73] The partial affirmation of incomplete sensory ideas checks the mind and is accompanied by the feeling of pain. When the mind has clear and distinct ideas of God it is active and unchecked and this produces the feeling of pleasure (3p11; 3p59dem; 5p18).

For Nadler 'Infinite thinking would thus be the first actualization of the attribute of thought generated by the power that is essential to Nature or substance' (2006: 90).

Now seeing that God's infinite intellect or infinite idea[74] is a mode that follows immediately from the attribute of thought, it is by virtue of its cause, eternal, infinite, simple, immutable and indivisible and must therefore involve and express God's essence. I have argued previously for the simplicity of God's essence and claim therefore that the idea of God, contained in his infinite intellect, is conceived by Spinoza to be a completely simple idea:

> In God there is only one simple idea. Finally, before bringing this discussion to a close, we ought to deal with the question as to whether there is in God more than one idea or only one most simple idea. To this I reply that God's idea through which he is called omniscient is unique and completely simple. (CM2/7 S: 199.)

> But God is one, and one only. Therefore, the idea of God, from which infinite things follow in infinite ways, must be one, and one only. (2p4dem.)

The above claim is rather difficult to understand and one wonders how the principle of simplicity should be understood with regard to God's infinite intellect, which does contain the idea of God, but seems also to contain other adequate ideas:

> In God there is necessarily the idea of both of his essence and of everything that necessarily follows from his essence. (2p3.)

I have argued that the immediate infinite modes have to do with the common properties, universal features or fundamental laws pertaining to their attribute. God's intellect should then contain the adequate ideas of the common properties involving motion and rest in matter and also the common ideas of the fundamental laws pertaining to its own attribute, i.e. Thought. The common notions governing God's intellect are perhaps the universal laws of cognition, which should include universal

[74] Refer Eisenberg (1971: 192) who also argues that the idea Dei and the infinite intellect are the same.

axioms and certain principles, such as the principle of sufficient reason, the identity of indiscernibles and others.[75] It is helpful that Spinoza describes the common notions pertaining to reason in 2p40sch as 'those notions that are called "common" and which are the basis for our reasoning processes.' The second kind of knowledge or reason is described as certain 'common notions and adequate ideas of the properties of things.' It seems then that God's infinite intellect contains the adequate ideas that express God's essence, i.e. the ideas of the attributes and the common notions or fundamental laws pertaining to physics and psychology. Now, how does this line up with Spinoza's claim that God's intellect must be conceived as *simple*? Following the discussion of adequacy and simplicity given earlier, simple ideas are necessarily involved whenever we form ideas of anything, or in Spinoza's terminology, such ideas are *equal in the part as in the whole* in all our ideas. In order to form the sensory idea of a body and think about it, the adequate idea of extension, the common notions pertaining to motion and rest, etc. are necessarily involved as well as the idea of thought and certain common notions universal and fundamental to reasoning. The essence of thought, that of affirmation, is also a simple idea, seeing that it is necessarily involved and expressed in all thought and this adequate idea would also be included in God's intellect. I argue then that the simplicity of God's intellect does not suggest that it contains only one idea of God, but that the ideas contained in God's intellect all express God's eternal and infinite essence and are therefore all of a universal nature and are basic adequate ideas that are necessarily involved and expressed in all our ideas, even our sensory ones. As argued earlier, such ideas that express God's essence and which are involved in all our ideas are the ideas of the attributes and the common notions.

How should Spinoza's view be understood, that a finite intellect is part of God's eternal and infinite intellect?

> Hence it follows that the human mind is part of the infinite intellect of God; and therefore when we say that the human mind perceives this or that, we are saying nothing less but this: that God – not insofar as he is infinite but insofar as he is explicated through the nature of the human mind, that is, insofar as he constitutes the essence of the human mind – has this or that idea. (2p11cor.)

[75] For Marshall (2008: 66 note 38), 'there is no reason to believe that we cannot form common notions about the fundamental laws of psychology as well as physics.'

According to the above citation, Spinoza conceives the human intellect as part of or involved in God's intellect. The argument seems to be based on the simplicity principle, that if our intellect is a part of God's intellect and God's intellect is equal in the part as in the whole, our finite intellect must then be equal to the whole and also contain the idea of God's essence in its entirety. A finite human intellect will then also contain the adequate ideas, which express God's essence. As suggested above, these are the ideas of the attributes and the common notions, which are necessarily involved in all our ideas. The *essence* of the mind referred to in above citation refers to the essence of thought to affirm the object of which it is the idea. This affirming essence is also necessarily present in all our ideas and must therefore also be equal in the part as in the whole and will be the essence of God's intellect and therefore also of ours.

I will show in the following chapter, in accordance with Spinoza's method, that the true idea of God can only be recovered by producing a true definition of it (TdIE§94). Definitions are required, for Spinoza, because God's idea in us has been weakened by forceful infective imaginary ideas. The process of *medicina mentis* or the EIP is to uncover the true idea of God's essence by putting our innate intellectual tools to work. Spinoza refers to this in an important note to his TTP (emphasis added):

> Now in order that we may conceive God's nature clearly and distinctly, we have to fix our attention on certain very simple axioms called universal axioms, and connect to them those attributes that belong to the divine nature. Only then does it become clear to us that God necessarily exists and is omnipresent, *and only then do we see that all our conceptions involve God's nature and are conceived through God's nature, and, finally, that everything that we adequately conceive is true.* (S: 574.)

Spinoza's well known definition of God is found in the opening passages of the Ethics:

> By God I mean an absolutely infinite Being possessing infinite attributes each of which expresses eternal and infinite essence. (1def6.)

3.1.4. The innate idea of God

In my opinion Spinoza employs the theory of innate ideas in his philosophy in much the same way as Descartes and other seventeenth-century innate ideas theorists.[76] In Spinoza, this theory claims that the human intellect is naturally endowed with the adequate idea of God's essence. The ideas contained in the intellect are of God's attributes and the common notions, which provide us with the basic adequate intellectual tools needed for forming ideas and thinking. The important role of our innate ideas is to enable us recognize and to affirm the adequate ideas of the attributes and the common notions. Moreover, it seems that without such innate tools we would not be able to form any ideas at all. For Spinoza, the innate idea of God also contains other true ideas, which can be deduced or inferred from it, such as the basic principles pertaining to morality and politics. God's idea in us is perhaps then much like a basic *kit* of intellectual tools (ideas) that enables us to think adequately. However, Spinoza thought that most human beings, take thinking for granted and are unaware of their dependence on their given innate ideas in order to form basic ideas of things and to think about things.

Some interesting formulations of the theory of the innate idea of God are found in the *Theological-Political Treatise* (TTP):

> Since, then, the human mind contains the nature of God within itself in concept, and partakes thereof, and is thereby enabled to form certain basic ideas that explain natural phenomena and inculcate morality, we are justified in asserting that the nature of the mind, insofar as it is thus conceived, is the primary cause

[76] The theory of innate ideas does not receive much attention in Spinoza scholarship and there even seems to be some doubt in attributing this theory to him at all. Della Rocca (2008: 133) and also Steinberg (2009: 157) seem to think that Spinoza did not hold that the mind has any inherently certain ideas that are validated through themselves, independently of other ideas. Margaret Wilson does however think that Spinoza 'is best thought of as aligned with the innatist camp' (1996:137n36). Nadler (2006: 175-176) does acknowledge that Spinoza's common notions are somewhat like the innate ideas of other seventeenth-century thinkers, but states that Spinoza is not entitled to a distinction between innate ideas and ideas caused externally. Marshall (2008: 81-87) clearly does take the notion of innateness in Spinoza seriously. One of the reasons for the theory of innate ideas being undervalued in Spinoza is perhaps that the term *innate idea* does not appear in the *Ethics*, although it does feature strongly in the TdIE and is also found in the TTP. In the *Ethics* (5p18dem) Spinoza does refer to God's idea *in* us and also says that our clear and distinct ideas are *in* us (5p28dem). In the TTP Spinoza writes that 'the mind of God and his eternal thoughts are inscribed in our minds' (TTP1 S: 403) and 'the Divine Law, which makes men truly blessed and teaches the true life…must be considered as innate in the human mind and inscribed therein, as it were' (TTP5 S: 435).

> of divine revelation. For, as I have just pointed out, all that we clearly and distinctly understand is dictated to us by the idea and nature of God - … (S: 395.)
>
> Now the mind of God and his eternal thoughts are inscribed in our minds, too, and therefore we also, in Scriptural language, perceive the mind of God. But since natural knowledge is common to all men, it is not so highly prized, as I have already said, and particularly in the case of the Hebrews, who vaunted themselves above all men – indeed despising all men and consequently the sort of knowledge common to all men. (S: 403.)
>
> The divine law (i.e. the idea of God)…must be considered as innate in the human mind and inscribed therein, as it were. (S: 435.)

In my opinion, Spinoza's theory of the innate idea of God plays a crucial role in his pursuit of certainty in knowledge and in his EIP. However, I cannot here undertake a detailed explication of this theory and will suffice with a few suggestions as to the role that the innate idea of God might play with regard to the EIP. Firstly, God's idea in us is seen by Spinoza to be the *means* by which we can achieve our highest perfection, which is to acquire the true knowledge of God (TTP4 S: 428). For Spinoza, it is only God himself who can reveal or give his idea to us (ST2/24), and it is his idea that *dictates* (TTP1 S: 395) other true ideas to us, and *truth is told us by the idea of God* (TTP4 S: 428). The importance of this theory should be apparent from the above and I suggest that Spinoza regards God's idea in us as much more than a single unassociated adequate idea, amongst many others, in the composite idea that the human mind is. As suggested earlier, a human intellect, which possesses the adequate idea of God's essence, should perhaps be understood to be more like an adequate *mind*, which possesses the basic ideas needed to think adequately and is thereby enabled to produce other true ideas. Spinoza does actually say that 'the mind of God and his eternal thoughts are inscribed in our minds (TTP1 S: 403). Although the formulations referred to above are quite metaphorical, they do give some indication of Spinoza's line of thinking in this regard. This subject does warrant further research, in my view. Secondly, I suggest that the subject of human agency in Spinoza be associated with his theory of the innate idea of God. I have argued that the

matter of human agency is very important for the EIP, which demands quite forceful intellectual action from our side. In order for the mind to undertake the task of emendation with some confidence, it needs to have an idea of *itself* as an adequate individual thinking thing.[77]

I started this chapter by discussing Spinoza's use of the notion of essence in the sense of our highest good and asked why he associates our self-determination and contentment with the mind? My conclusion is that Spinoza turns to our mind, more specifically to the intellect or the innate idea of God, because it affords us the possibility of becoming more self-determined and self-content by discovering adequate ideas. This all depends crucially on discovering God's idea in us, and partaking thereof. In Spinoza, the innate idea of God plays a critical role in

[77] Koistinen (2009a) addresses the issue of *subjecthood* in Spinoza and correctly thinks that Spinoza's demand on human agency needs a strong notion of individual action, which does not seem to follow from the interpretation of the human mind as a bundle of ideas. This matter is important for this work in that the EIP is something that we need to undertake ourselves. In this process we need to know that we are on the right track by following *our* true ideas. I agree with much in this interesting paper, but differ from his take on the way in which Spinoza conceives the constitution of God's power and his intellect. Koistinen (ibid.:153) makes the point that agency cannot be reduced to ideas alone. Some individual identity and thinking force is also required. He seeks the latter in the power of substance (ibid.:155). To secure power for individual minds, without compromising the infinite nature of God, he turns to the Kantian notion of intensive magnitudes and sees God's intellect as constituted by infinite intellects that differ from one another in terms of intensity of thinking force. He writes: 'once an infinite intellect is given…all the others are ipso facto given, as being embedded into one infinite intellect' (ibid.:158). His proposal is enticing, but I am not sure that this reading does not compromise the simple nature of God's power. The notion of degree does introduce some limitation to God's power. The thought of degree seems at odds with the simplicity of the God's power, which must be equal in the part as in the whole. I do not see how something that is definite and determinate by nature can be imbedded into something that is by nature infinite and undetermined. Seeing that human agency is important in making sense of the EIP, I suggest a different approach to this matter. I propose Spinoza's theory of the innate idea of God as an alternative solution to the question of agency. I suggest the theory of innateness as a candidate in that it holds the key elements required for adequate thinking. Firstly, the infinite intellect possesses adequate ideas of God's essence and inheres directly in God's power of thought. A human intellect is involved in God's intellect and also possesses adequate ideas and thinking power. Spinoza claims the innate idea of God can be deduced from the nature of man and is therefore common to all mankind. For Spinoza 'man thinks' (2ax2) and seeing that the idea of God is given when thought is given (1p21dem), the idea of God is common to all human minds. Secondly, that Spinoza regards the idea of God to be innate to particular human beings suggests that he accepts some singularity of the idea of God. This is important for the EIP, which requires that we produce *our* own true ideas. In Spinoza an actual mind is the idea of its existing body. Being innate, the idea of God must then in some way *firstly* (ST2/22 S: 95; 2p11dem) identify itself with its body and, in a sense, become a singular intellect. The body does play a role in developing the notion of a self in Spinoza (STapp2 S: 107). However, does this not compromise the simple nature of God's idea? I argue that all intellects are the same in that they all possess the idea of God's essence in its entirety (TdIE§73). In this view then, a finite intellect is seen to be a powerful eternal, singular, thinking thing, with nothing personal attached to it. In this view God's intellect is constituted by such modes of thinking (5p40). However, for Spinoza, the infinite intellect is a *mode* of thinking and therefore always depends on God's power for its essence and existence. Although the innate idea of God does seem to be the means by which we can be active and confidently undertake the EIP, the intellect is never autonomous and remains dependent on God. For Spinoza *nothing can be or be conceived without God*.

establishing the very basis for acquiring adequate ideas and securing epistemological certitude:[78]

> … all that we clearly and distinctly understand is dictated to us by the idea and nature of God – not indeed in words, but in a far superior way and one that agrees excellently with the nature of the mind, as everyone who has tasted intellectual certainty has doubtless experienced in his own case. (TTP1 S: 395.)

3.1.5. Parallelism

The so-called doctrine of parallelism plays an important role in Spinoza's epistemology and also in his method of emending the intellect. Spinoza's theory pertaining to parallelism is an extensive subject and I will only say something brief about its relevance of for the EIP. In the corollary to 2p7 Spinoza says:

> Hence it follows that God's power of thinking is on par with his power of acting. That is, whatever follows formally from the infinite nature of God, all this follows from the idea of God as an object of thought in God according to the same order and connection.

In the early modern theory of ideas, the notions of objective and formal essence play an important role. In this theory of cognition the ideas in the mind are understood to be *objective essences* that exist in the mind and represent or contain the *formal essences* of the objects existing outside the mind that are cognized. In Spinoza the abovementioned theory is associated with his theory of parallelism, which claims that the essence of the absolutely infinite substance or God is necessarily and simultaneously expressed, both formally (external to the mind) and objectively (in the mind). For Spinoza 'thinking substance and extended substance are one and the same substance, comprehended now under this attribute, now under that. So, too, a mode of extension and the idea of that mode are one and the same thing expressed in two ways' (2p7sch). The idea of God or the infinite intellect contains, *objectively* (in the

[78] I argue in chapters five and six, that the theory of the innate idea of God, in my view, also sheds some light on Spinoza's difficult notion of intuitive knowledge of the third kind and has also to do with his theory of the mind's eternity.

form of thought), the adequate ideas of the attributes and common properties of immediate infinite modes that exist externally to the mind or *formally*, in Nature. The ideas of God in the mind will be clear and distinct whereas the ideas of other objects, such as particular things will be obscure and confused. Such partial sensory ideas are not contained in the intellect but form part of the imagination, which is based on sense perception. The theory of parallelism is also found in Spinoza's earlier work:

> …the most immediate mode of the attribute, which we call thought, contains *objective* the formal essence of all things … And since, as a matter of fact, Nature or God is one being of which infinite attributes are predicated, and which contains in itself all the essences of created things, it necessarily follows that all of this there is produced in Thought an infinite Idea, which comprehends *objective* the whole of Nature just as it is *realiter*. (STapp2 S: 104.)

In Spinoza, God's intellect contains the adequate ideas of God's essence as expressed in his attributes and in the immediate infinite modes, i.e. extension and thought and also other adequate common notions. In accordance with parallelism this happens necessarily, since God expresses his essence in all the attributes simultaneously (1p10sch; 2p7cor). Spinoza's doctrine of parallelism is then clearly of importance for his method and EIP. The notion of parallelism is grounded in the *causa sui* nature of substance, that it is self caused and conceived. God expresses his essence in all possible ways, both formally (outside of the mind) and objectively (in the mind) and this arrangement guarantees that God's essence is adequately expressed in the human mind:

> Therefore, that which gives knowledge of the eternal and infinite essence of God is common to all things, and equally in the part as in the whole. And so this knowledge will be adequate. (2p46dem.)

God's eternal and infinite essence is adequately expressed in the human mind and is therefore intelligible (2p47).

3.1.6. The nature and constitution of the mind

We should now be in a position to answer the question regarding the nature and constitution of the human mind.[79] Firstly, as argued earlier and following from the essence of thought, the essence or nature of a human mind is the endeavor to positively affirm or understand an actually existing human body (2p11dem).

In accordance with the notion of parallelism, when a finite body actually exists in nature there will necessarily also be an idea of this body.[80] For Spinoza: 'The idea which constitutes the formal being of the human mind is not simple, but composed of very many ideas' (2p15). The mind is the idea of the body, which is composed of a great number of very composite individual material parts and since, in accordance with the doctrine of parallelism, there must necessarily be an idea of every component part, the human mind must be composed of the many ideas of all the component parts (2p15dem). Spinoza seems to regard the human mind as a composite idea, made up of many ideas, which include the ideas of the many parts of the body (Nadler 2006: 157). This does not mean to say that the idea of the body or the mind is produced by or arises from the body (3p11sch). The affirmation of an existing body follows or results from antecedent idea, which includes the idea of the existence of the body and so on:

> For (2p6) the cause of the mind's affirming the existence of the body is not that the body began to exist; therefore, by the same reasoning, it does not cease to affirm the existence of the body on account of the body's ceasing to be. This results from another idea, which excludes the present existence of the

[79] Although Spinoza says that all things are animate to a degree, I will only consider human minds, which is also Spinoza's main concern.

[80] In Spinoza scholarship the union between mind and body is often explained in terms of the double aspect theory. For Nadler, Spinoza is a 'property dualist' who claims that there is one substance, but this substance has mental modes or ideas and physical modes or bodies. A human being, in this view, has a mental and a material aspect (2008: 143). Della Rocca (2008: 99-108) seems to hold a similar view. Koistinen (2009a: 2011a) argues convincingly against the double aspect theory as a sufficient explanation of the union between mind and body in Spinoza. Although the double aspect theory is important in this regard, it does clearly fall short in explaining the idea of a quite intimate *union* between mind and body that Spinoza seems to hold. In the TdIE Spinoza says if we understand the essence of the soul or mind, we will know that it is united to the body (§22). I have argued that the essence of thought or mind is that it affirms or loves its object. The essence of the human mind is to affirm its body and it is this essence of the mind, in my view, which strengthens its union with a body. This is the mind's conatus (3p10dem).

> body and consequently that of our mind, and which is therefore contrary to the idea that constitutes the essence of our mind (2p8). (3p11sch.)

Actual minds are however finite modes of thought and are not produced directly or immediately by God. They are brought about by other universal and finite causes pertaining to thought, as is the case with particular bodies, which are also produced by both universal and finite natural laws pertaining to motion and rest (1p28; 2p9; TP2 S: 684).

Now an actual human mind is conceived by Spinoza to consist of two parts, namely the imagination and the intellect (TdIE§84; 2p11cor; 5p40cor). The former refers to ideas arising passively from sense perception due to the body being fortuitously affected by external causes, whereas the latter refers to the adequate ideas of God's essence. The composite human mind is then made up of two kinds of ideas - inadequate sensory ideas and the adequate ideas of the attributes and the common notions. The objects correlating to the sensory ideas in the mind are the many parts making up the complex durational body and the objects to which the adequate ideas relate are the attributes of God and the immediate infinite modes. Recall that according to Spinoza's theory of innateness, the idea of God's essence is directly communicated to all actual minds and is adequate. An actual mind will then have two kinds of ideas existing in it, some of which are wholly possessed or contained, and others only partially.[81] In the EIP Spinoza turns mainly to the adequate ideas of the intellect, whereas the inadequate sensory ideas, related to the body, play a secondary role.[82]

In closing, with regard to the intellect, I refer to the TdIE where Spinoza gives a well-known description of his conception of the composition of a human mind. He

[81] Although Spinoza does distinguish quite strongly between the intellect and the imagination, I do not think they should be understood to be separate parts or faculties in the mind. A more fruitful approach is perhaps to think that all our ideas are comprised of adequate elements and inadequate or incomplete elements. The adequate ideas in the mind are necessarily involved whenever we form ideas of things. In order to form a sensory idea of some thing the adequate ideas of the attributes and the common notions are necessarily employed. If, for example, we have an idea of a certain dog we must conceive it under the attribute of extension and utilize the common notions of size, shape, motion and rest and the like. These common elements of our idea of the dog will be adequate. The other more particular aspects of the dog, such as its particular nature, breed and coat type will however be partial and inadequate. We are able to discern the adequate and inadequate elements in such an idea and assign the former to the intellect and the latter to the imagination.

[82] The body is not completely devalued in Spinoza and it does also have an important role to play. See Nadler (2006: 176) who writes: '…and it may be that for Spinoza, as for the innate idea theorists, sensory input is needed to stimulate the mind to actually think of these ideas of the common features of things'. This will be discussed in more detail towards the end of this chapter.

writes, our minds '…are part of some thinking being, some of whose thoughts constitute our mind in their entirety, and some only in part' (§73).[83] As argued, I understand this passage to say that a finite intellect contains the idea of God's essence in its entirety. This is possible by virtue of the simplicity principle, which stipulates that the idea of God's essence is simple and cannot be divided into different parts, nor can it be of different intensities. The ideas expressing God's essence (the ideas of the attributes and common notions) must be adequately impressed, i.e. in their *entirety* in our minds. The innate idea of God will undoubtedly have more effect than the partial sensory ideas in the mind, but seeing that the idea of God is entirely possessed in different human minds, it should have the same force in all humans, in my view. I contend therefore, that all human minds will have the adequate idea of God's essence innately. The project of emending the intellect depends on the ability of the mind to produce adequate ideas and in my view it is the intellect or the innate idea of God that plays a crucial role in making this possible. It is:

> For the eternal part of the mind (5p23 and 5p29) is the intellect through which alone we are said to be active (3p3), whereas that part which we have shown to perish is the imagination (5p21), through which alone we are said to be passive (3p3 and Gen. Def. of Emotions). (5p40cor.)

An important remaining question is how the different kinds of minds are to be explained? How does, for example, the mind of Paul differ from Peter's or the mind of a dog from that of a human being? We have established that the very essence of thought and that of all ideas or minds is the positive affirmation or idea of its object, which is the same in all minds. In this respect all minds have the same nature or essence, i.e. affirmation. In Spinoza's view, the difference between actual minds is based on the difference between the objects of which they are the ideas. In the case of extended things, the difference in their ideas or minds follows from their bodies differing from one another (2p13sch). The following texts are important in this regard:

[83] Craig (1996: 49), in a comment on this passage, suggests a connection between the innate ideas of the intellect and Spinoza's knowledge of the third kind. He writes: 'It is presumably those thoughts which it is given to us to think in their entirety which provides us with our tantalizing taste of Spinoza's third and most perfect type of knowledge, *scientia intuitiva'*. This will be discussed in chapter six.

> Yet we cannot deny, too, that ideas differ among themselves as do their objects, and that one is more excellent and contains more reality than another, just as the object of one idea is more excellent than that of the other and contains more reality. (2p13sch.)

> For the excellence of ideas and the actual power of thinking are measured by the excellence of the object. (Gen. def. of Emotions 3.)

As argued earlier, finite modes (bodies and their ideas or minds) are not produced directly by their respective attributes. Particular things are also brought about to exist in a certain manner by an infinite chain of finite causes (1p28). This is the case with regard to finite minds as well:

> The idea of an individual thing existing in actuality has God for its cause not insofar as he is infinite but insofar as he is considered as affected by another idea of a thing existing in actuality, of which God is the cause insofar as he is affected by a third idea, and so on ad infinitum. (2p9.)

This is confirmed in TP2:

> They hold that the mind is not produced by natural causes and is directly created by God and is so independent of other things that it has an absolute power to determine itself and to use reason in a correct way. But experience teaches us only too well that it is no more in our power to have a sound mind than to have a sound body. (S: 684.)

As to how an actual mind is actually produced by finite causes[84], Spinoza does not say. I assume this is a task for the natural sciences to undertake. Spinoza does seem

[84] Edwin Curley (1988: 78) reads Spinoza's philosophy as materialistic. He argues that in Spinoza 'to understand the mind we must understand the body, without which the mind could not function or even exist. In spite of all the materialistic talk, the order of understanding never proceeds from mind to body'. Nadler (2006: 146-153) seems to agree with this line of thinking. I do not think Spinoza's philosophy is materialistic. In Spinoza, God's very essence is his power, which is expressed in all possible ways and not only in corporeality. Furthermore, for Spinoza, this motion and rest inheres in God and is not understood to have its *own* inherent power. All being arises and is sustained by God's

however quite adamant to express that an actual finite mind is not formed by God directly, is not a separate substance and not eternal. As argued, only a part of it is, the intellect, which is involved in God's intellect. Moreover, Spinoza is very clear that the mind or idea and its object *must* exist together.[85] Spinoza states this quite clearly in ST2/20:

> Between the Idea and the object there must necessarily be a union, because the one cannot exist without the other: for there is no thing whose idea is not in the thinking thing, and no idea can exist unless the thing also exists. (note 21 S: 91.)

Hopefully, it has become clearer in the course of this chapter, why Spinoza regards the intellect to be our so-called *better part.* For Spinoza, our intellect is part of or involved in God's intellect and is the source of our adequate ideas (2p11cor). To live in accordance with reason is the highest expression of human power and is also the very epitome of human virtue (4p52dem).

3.2. Body

In the following section I will consider Spinoza's theory of the body, with regard to his method of emending the intellect. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter Spinoza also employs the notion of essence in a moral sense of our highest good or perfection as human beings. In this sense, the concept of essence is associated with the question of human agency or how human power is best expressed. As argued in the previous section the highest expression of human power is when we live in accordance with reason. In Spinoza's own words:

> To act from virtue is to act by the guidance of reason (4p24) and whatever we endeavor to do in accordance with reason is to understand (4p26). So (4p28) the

power, which is not only identified with corporeal matter. Spinoza also writes that 'by Nature, I do not mean simply matter and its modifications, but infinite other things besides matter' (TTP6 S: 446).

[85] This was an important issue in the seventeenth century, which was a time of superstition and credulity. The theory of the necessary union between body and mind is an important critique of such imaginative thinking. It is, for Spinoza, only philosophy that can prove that spirits, ghosts and devils, do not exist. This is something that experience and empirical research can never do.

> highest good of those who pursue virtue is to know God; that is (2p47; 2p47sch) a good that is common to all men and can be possessed equally by all men insofar as they are of the same nature. (4p36dem.)

I argue that it is a hallmark trait of early rationalist philosophy of Descartes and Spinoza to turn to the innate adequate ideas in the mind in the search for certainty and the ensuing joy and peace of mind. It is quite notable that these philosophers seem to largely exclude the body from the above task. This important matter will be attended to in this section and I argue that this has much to do with the dawning of a new theory of the natural world in this period, that of mechanism.

3.2.1. Mechanism

The early modern period is the time in our history in which a major shift took place in the way in which the natural world was understood. This refers to the advent of the new mechanist theory of nature, which formed an integral part of the new emerging science of the day. Spinoza clearly employed much of the new mechanist view of the natural world in his philosophy, although he did also depart quite decisively from his contemporaries in some aspects of this theory, which will be discussed shortly. Although Spinoza did not regard himself as a natural scientist (2p13sch), he saw his philosophy as very much part of the new science of that time (Klever 1996: 33). Spinoza saw his work as contributing towards the development and furthering of a new worldview in accordance with the scientific discoveries of his time, which could replace the prevailing one that, in his view, was based on mainly inadequate religious ideas.[86] His rationalist mindset saw no disparity between philosophy and physics and he was convinced that nature could not contravene reason and vice versa. His rationalist dictum states that '…whatever is contrary to nature is contrary to reason, and whatever is contrary to reason is absurd, and should therefore be rejected' (TTP6 S: 452). His rationalist conviction is that the adequate ideas of the mind, contained in

[86] In his important work *Radical Enlightenment* (2002: 3-13), Jonathan Israel distinguishes between a radical and a more moderate approach to the general desire for renewal in early modern society in Europe. The moderate approach attempted to insulate the traditional and largely religious based prevailing worldview from the discoveries and of the new science. I agree with his assessment that Spinoza saw his work to form part of the radical wing of the early enlightenment, which was firmly committed to the employment of reason to *all* aspects of early modern life.

the intellect, are in complete agreement with the inmost essence, i.e. the fundamental aspects or universal laws governing our universe (TdIE§108).

Spinoza was quite rigorous in the thoroughgoing application of the new mechanist concepts and differed from the Cartesians and also empiricists such as Boyle and Newton, who were somewhat hesitant in applying the mechanist view to all spheres of reality.[87] In broad terms, Spinoza accepted the new mechanist theory of the natural world and his views on this subject, are largely in accordance with those of Galileo, Descartes, Gassendi, Boyle and later, Newton. What was of particular importance for Spinoza was to develop the mechanist theory in such a way as to accommodate his quite revolutionary *immanentist* conception of God. This was an extremely radical move in early modern times and sets his views regarding God and corporeality distinctly apart from most of his contemporaries.[88] Spinoza was seemingly not committed to uphold or to protect the traditional view of the Church or those of any other traditional institutions (Mason 2003: 43). He was evidently quite stringent in this regard and showed a consequent and firm commitment to bring all of human thought before the *bar of reason* (Shirley: 238).

3.2.2. Immanentism

In general, the early modern mechanist theory is based on the conception of the natural world as a *machine* that works largely independently from intervention from the outside, by its own means and in accordance with its own order and laws. One of the best-known metaphors from this period used to illustrate this new vision of the natural world was that of a clock (Downing 2002: 343). Our universe was increasingly understood to be much like an independent substance, with its own universal and fixed order and laws that governed all aspects of its existence. What Spinoza stressed more than others was the thoroughgoing application of this theory, without exception. Reason's certain conception of the natural world as a single

[87] According to Israel (2002: 243): 'Cartesians postulated a dichotomy of substance, conceiving reality to operate within two totally separate spheres or sets of rules governing reality, only one of which was mechanist and subject to the laws of physical cause and effect. Boyle, Newton, and other English empiricists insisted that only what is proven to operate mechanistically, by experiment, is definitely known to be subject to cause and effect, leaving much else beyond what is humanly knowable.'

[88] 'All (the new and great early modern thinkers) except Spinoza and Bayle sought to accommodate the new advances in science and mathematics to Christian belief (if not always to that of one or other Church) and the authority of Scripture' (Israel 2002: 15).

corporeal substance, demanded that none of its aspects (such as its power) could stand outside or above it. He regarded traditional and religious notions, such as the *supernatural* as inadequate ideas and figments of human imagination.

In Spinoza's view, our universe consists of two domains. He discerns, firstly, the realm of Natura naturans, the fundamental divine essence that creates and sustains all things and secondly, the realm of Natura naturata, the durational world of particular things which inheres in and depends wholly on the former as its cause. Although Spinoza patently rejects the traditional view of God as a transcendent creator, he does not at all, in my view, summarily dispatch the entire traditional notion of God from his philosophy. To the contrary, as argued earlier, the notion of God continues to play an important role in his thought and especially so, for his main philosophical task, that of attaining epistemological certitude. In my opinion, Spinoza aimed to develop a new vision or understanding of things in which the traditional idea of God and the role assigned to him was mostly maintained, but that God was now seen to be immanent in his creation and no longer separate from it. This conception, however, was regarded as extremely radical in his time and as an almost complete departure from the traditional Judeo – Christian conception of God as a transcendent creator who causes a world, quite distinct from his own nature, to come into being by creating it out of nothing.

What was especially distasteful to Spinoza's more traditional thinking contemporaries was his inclusion of corporeality into the divine essence.[89] Most of the early modern mechanists (both rationalist and empiricist), such as Descartes, Boyle, Newton and others continued to ascribe power or motion in corporeal nature to God in the traditional way. As suggested above, Spinoza did not discard the notion of God from his thought and simply assign the important notion of power to matter itself. Following from his doctrine of substance monism, Spinoza conceives God to be immanent in our world as an eternal *naturing* essence, that is, a creative and sustaining or concurring power, from which all things follow and on which they

[89] This is one of the most defining radical features of Spinoza's thought. Spinoza conceives the immediate mode of motion in matter to follow directly from the attribute of extension, thereby including corporeality directly into God's essence (1p15sch). Although the mediate infinite mode of finite corporeal things follows only indirectly from God, the fact that Spinoza's system includes corporeality as such in the divine nature was enough evidence to rouse suspicions against the intentions of his philosophy. His view was fiercely rejected by the Church and by most early modern philosophers and regarded as synonymous with atheism. For a fine discussion of this subject see Van Ruler (2008: 172).

intimately depend. For Spinoza 'whatever is, is in God and nothing can be or be conceived without God (1p15) and this includes corporeality. However, his immanentist thinking did, no doubt, conceive power to somehow be inherent in our world and this notion was fiercely spurned and deemed to pave the way towards atheism (Downing 2002: 341). It is notable that Spinoza consistently rejected such accusations of atheism (Ep30). He did however stand firm in his rationalist conviction that the essence of the corporeal world could not be at odds with reason and one of the consequences of his theory of substance and essence monism was that corporeality had to be conceived as somehow contained in and following from God's essence and as having something essential in common with it (1ax5).

3.2.3. Motion in matter

In Spinoza's system, motion and rest in matter, is conceived to be the first or immediate infinite modification that follows from or is caused by the absolute nature of the attribute of extension (Ep64).[90] Seeing that this mode follows *directly* from God, it is understood to be infinite or powerful, by virtue of the cause in which it inheres. Spinoza held this view from early on in his career as seen in the following citation from the *Short Treatise*:

> Now, as regards the *general Natura naturata*, or the modes, or creations which depend on, or have been created by, God immediately, of these we know no more than two, namely *motion* in matter, and the *understanding* in the thinking thing.
>
> All that specially concerns *Motion*, such as it *has been from all eternity, and to all eternity it will remain immutable; that it is infinite in its kind; that it can neither be nor be understood through itself*, but only by means of Extension…, (ST1/9 S: 58,9.)

In his later *Theological-Political Treatise* Spinoza seems to hold the same view regarding this matter:

[90] This is an intellectual insight that is formed by considering the true idea of extension or quantity. The concept of motion (in matter) is seen to be contained in the idea of an infinite extended substance and can be inferred or deduced from it (TdIE§108).

> Now, in examining natural phenomena we first of all try to discover those features that are most universal and common to the whole of nature, to wit, motion-and-rest and the rules and laws governing them which nature always observes and through which she constantly acts; (TTP7 S: 460.)

That Spinoza conceives the immediate infinite mode of *motion* in matter[91] to be infinite by virtue of the cause, in which it inheres, is an important point. Spinoza does not, in my view, regard matter *itself* as inherently powerful. Its power or motion follows from God's very essence, which is its cause and in which it continually inheres. For Spinoza, without God's immanent eternal power, the durational realm of corporeal things cannot exist nor continue in existence. Although particular bodies are brought about by other bodies to exist in a certain manner, the power whereby this takes place and by which bodies persist in their existence, follows from God's eternal and infinite power. A further point, that has been discussed in some detail earlier, is that the divine properties of eternity, simplicity, immutability and indivisibility are also assigned to this immediate mode of motion and rest in matter, by virtue of it following directly from its attribute (1p21). This has been justified earlier and the argument will not be repeated here.

3.2.4. Particular bodies

With the above as background, I will now attend to Spinoza's theory of particular bodies in more detail. The main aim here is to explain why Spinoza deems the body to be unsuited to the task of attaining our highest perfection as human beings, which is to become as self-determined and active as possible. For Spinoza: 'The essence of man (2p10cor) is constituted by definite modes of the attributes of God, to wit (2ax2), modes of thinking' (2p11dem). The axiom to which he refers, states that 'man thinks'.

[91] With regard to interpreting Spinoza's notion of the infinite immediate modes there is of course much uncertainty. Nadler (2006: 87-98) gives a good discussion of some ways in which this matter can be approached. In my view, Spinoza's own explanation of this mode, as *motion* in matter (cited above), seems best. He means to say that the inmost essence of the durational world of corporeal phenomena is just *motion* (and rest) in matter. The durational mode of *motion* in matter is an eternal, infinite, immutable and indivisible expression of God's very essence or power. All particular bodies, produced by this eternal and infinite motion in matter are, in essence, just certain ratios or proportions of motion and rest in matter (ST2app2 S: 106). This conception is not obvious to the senses and is an intellectual insight.

With regard to our human essence, Spinoza seems by and large, to disregard the body and one would like to know why this is the case.

With regard to particular bodies, of which we experience a great variety, Spinoza seems to follow Descartes's mechanist approach that: 'All the variety in matter, all the diversity of its forms, depends on motion' (CSM I: 232).[92] For both Descartes and Spinoza, particular bodies are produced in accordance with the laws governing motion-and-rest in matter.[93] It is mainly in the second part of the *Ethics*, in the well - known '*Physical Digression'*, after 2p13 that Spinoza attends to these matters. For him the variety found in natural bodies is brought about solely by motion and rest in matter and particular 'bodies are distinguished from one another in respect of motion and rest, quickness and slowness, and not in respect of substance' (2p13lem1). That which differentiates particular material things from one another is motion and rest in matter and different bodies are formed when certain speed-ratios of motion in matter are brought about.[94] For example, the difference between a man and a horse is attributed to their bodies differing in terms of *quickness and slowness*, i.e. motion in matter. As Nadler says, 'what distinguishes one parcel of extension from another can be only the relative motive differences between the two parcels' (2006: 138). This of course signifies a telling departure from the traditional hylemorphic view.[95] As claimed above, Spinoza employs this mechanist view throughout his writings, as can be seen from the following citation:

> … extension contains no other modes than motion and rest, and … every particular material thing is nothing else than a certain proportion of motion and rest.., (STapp2 S: 106.)

> When a number of bodies of the same or different magnitude form close contact with one another through the pressure of other bodies upon them, or if they are

[92] For Thiel (1998: 229) Spinoza's theory of the individuation of bodies takes up mechanist ideas from Descartes.
[93] See for example Descartes's three laws pertaining to natural bodies (CSM I: 240-242). Spinoza does not claim to have precise knowledge of how material things are produced in accordance with these laws (Ep32; TTP4 S: 427).
[94] With regard to the EIP, as discussed earlier, a relatively stable individual nature that can be known to an extent by the mind is very important. This helps the mind to form an idea of itself. Although the individual natures of bodies, i.e. the exact ratio of motion and rest in matter cannot be adequately known, we can have some experiential knowledge that a body does indeed have such a nature and that the possibility of it's construction is contained and follows from God.
[95] For an interesting alternative interpretation of Spinoza's views on individuation see Viljanen (2011).

> moving at the same or different rates of speed so as to preserve an unvarying relation of movement among themselves, these bodies are said to be united with one another and all together to form one body or individual thing, which is distinguished from other things through this union of bodies. (2lem3ax2def.)

It is evident that, for Spinoza, particular bodies are formed by internal and external causes (speed-ratio from within and pressure from without) and that these factors give rise to a certain stable ratio of motion and rest between the many parts, which the individual body, thus formed, endeavors to maintain. Apart from the two elements mentioned, Spinoza seems to also attribute a natural tendency to the parts to harmonize or cohere with one another to form a particular body and to preserve its nature:

> By coherence of parts I mean simply this, that the laws or nature of one part adapts itself to the laws or nature of another part in such wise that there is the least possible opposition between them. (Ep32 S: 848.)

It is quite clear then that, for Spinoza, particular things are determined to exist in a certain manner by other finite causes (2p45sch). This *certain manner* refers to the individual natures of different bodies and to durational aspects, such as, when, where and for how long finite things exist. Seeing that the immediate infinite mode of motion in matter inheres directly in God and that particular bodies are conceived to be finite expressions or modes that arise from motion and rest in matter, particular bodies, once formed to exist in a certain manner (2p45sch), do have the means or their *own*[96] power to preserve their nature and to strive for the improvement of their being. Furthermore, Descartes and Spinoza both thought that there are some given basic ways in which corporeal matter can be shaped to form particular bodies of different sizes. Such possible shapes or structures of corporeal matter are seen to come about in accordance with the laws governing motion and rest (STapp1p4 S: 103).

Being necessarily part of mobile matter, particular material things are continually exposed to the affections of other bodies that constitute the whole of motion and rest.

[96] As argued this is a legitimate albeit inadequate view. A particular thing's apparent *own* power is nothing else than God's eternal and infinite power that sustains all modes.

Spinoza writes about this in his quite famed *letter 32* to Henry Oldenburg of the Royal Society:

> Now since the nature of the universe is not limited … but is absolutely infinite, its parts are controlled by the nature of this infinite potency in infinite ways, and are compelled to undergo infinite variations. (S: 849.)

In this mechanist view, particular bodies, in order to survive, need then to continually adapt (as far as they can) to the ever-dynamic motion of the world of natural things of which they are an inextricably small part. If however, the affect from external forces is too strong and a body's own ratio of motion and rest is disrupted and overpowered, it will perish. In Spinoza's mechanist view, particular bodies are understood to be part of the eternal and infinite mode of motion in matter and therefore continually at the mercy of external forces. An important point now is that all the *trials and tribulations* of particular bodies, caused by the many affects on them, brought about by this dynamic interaction with other things, cannot be known with complete certainty. Such knowledge depends on understanding the totality of causes by which a body is determined to exist in a certain manner and is clearly beyond the grasp of a finite human mind. The immediate infinite mode of motion in matter is seen by Spinoza to be infinite, by virtue of its cause, and its infinite affections or expressions cannot be determined or comprehended by a finite human mind:

> … if anyone were to attempt to determine all the motions of matter that have ever been, reducing them and their duration to definite number and time, he would surely be attempting to deprive corporeal Substance, which we cannot conceive as other than existing, of its affections, and to bring it about that Substance should not possess the nature which it does possess. (Ep12 S: 790.)

An example of an *attempt to determine all the motions of matter*, cited above, would be to think that motion in matter produces its finite modes according to a fixed and pre-determined plan. Such an anthropomorphic view would rob the extended (corporeal) substance of its divine nature. As argued earlier, the single very essence of God is expressed as a corporeal substance and also in the mode of motion in matter. The latter, therefore, has also an infinite or unlimited nature. We can however have

some experiential knowledge of the complex durational existence of natural phenomena, but this will always be incomplete. One of the most important reasons for this situation is that the sensory ideas that arise passively in the mind due to the body's affections are partial and incomplete.[97] For Spinoza, a particular body is part of nature and 'a part … cannot be adequately conceived through itself independently of the other individual parts' (4app S: 358).

The inevitable consequence, in my view, of this mechanist theory is that particular bodies, despite seemingly having individual natures (unique speed ratios of matter), are not conceived to be strictly individual at all, but are seen as parts of a larger *body*, i.e. the whole of motion and rest in matter (2p13sch):

> We shall readily conceive the whole of Nature as one individual whose parts – that is, all the constituent bodies – vary in infinite ways without any change in the individual as a whole. (2p13sch.)

In Spinoza the above conception is counter intuitive and a rather unnatural and a difficult way of perceiving things (1p15sch). Most people are accustomed to perceiving things in a common sense manner, by sense perception (2p29cor). However, if we accept that the natural world, in essence, amounts to motion and rest in matter, then the many different material bodies (which are varying speeds of matter) must cohere and harmonize with one another to form a unified body of motion and rest. Garber (1998: 591) describes Spinoza's view as *stretching mechanism* and amounting to perceiving the corporeal world as a whole, i.e. as a complex body, made up of simpler bodies. In this mechanist conception of the natural world, a particular body simply cannot stand outside of this whole body of motion or not cohere with it and with other bodies, without immediately perishing. To perceive bodies in this way, for example, would be to think that we can remove (and keep intact) a certain wave in the ocean from the body of mobile water or that the wave in question has its own unique shape and motion because of its own nature and to disregard the continuous determining influence of the motion of the whole body of water and that of

[97] A detailed explication of Spinoza's theory of sense perception will not be given here. For the purpose of explaining his theory of emending the intellect it suffices to know that ideas based on sense perception arise in the mind due to the body being passively affected by things external to it. For Spinoza, perceiving things through the senses is to follow the *common order of nature* and such common sense knowledge is regarded as confused and fragmentary and therefore unsuitable for his EIP (2p29cor).

surrounding motions or waves on it. As argued quite extensively thus far, particular material things are superficially conceived as separate parts through the senses, which Spinoza sees to be quite a natural, albeit inadequate, way to understand things. The true intellectual conception of corporeality is however very difficult for us, seeing that we too are embodied limited things:

> If therefore we consider quantity insofar as we represent it in the imagination – and this what we more frequently and readily do – we find it to be finite, divisible, and made up of parts. But if we consider it intellectually and conceive it insofar as it is substance – and this is very difficult – then it will be found to be infinite, one, and indivisible, as we have already sufficiently proved. This will be quite clear to those who can distinguish between the imagination and the intellect, especially if this point is stressed, that matter is everywhere the same, and there are no distinct parts in it except insofar as we conceive matter as modified in various ways. Then its parts are distinct, not really but only modally. (1p15sch.)

It has been discussed in chapter two that a key element in Spinoza's view of particular things is the conception of particular things as *modes* of the undivided extended substance in motion and not as separate individual bodies that exist by their own means. This view does not aim to devalue particular material things, but seeks to uncover their inmost essence, which is received from God's power on which they wholly depend. Conceiving the Natura naturata in this way is, in my view, the unavoidable consequence of Spinoza's commitment to his doctrine of substance and essence monism.[98] At bottom, the consequence of the notion of essence monism is

[98] Han van Ruler (2009: 172) articulates this development in early modern rationalist thought very well: 'Not only did Spinoza remain faithful to the Cartesian idea that mind and matter are irreducible metaphysical categories, he also accepted the distinction between being as it is in itself and the 'modes' of finite duration - a distinction Spinoza presents in terms of an active substance of *natura naturans* on the one hand, and *natura naturata* on the other, consisting of infinite series of successive *modi.* Geulincx's Body-as-such was thus included into the essence of God, and the divine attributes of thought (Cogitatio) and extension (Extensio) were combined into a single substance that functioned as an absolute individual. By distinguishing this single 'substance' from its temporal 'modes', Spinoza only furthered the Platonic division between eternal and temporal being. The similarities between Geulincx's and Spinoza's analyses illustrate in what way the Cartesian onslaught on Aristotelian metaphysics initiated a new ontology. Geulincx's and Spinoza's point was not so much to identify substance and attribute, as to emphasise the gulf between the substance-attribute conglomerate and its modal effects. Ultimate 'natures' or 'forms' of existence, whether 'Body' or 'Mind' in Geulincx's case, or, in Spinoza's, 'Substance', are *eo ipso* distinguished from their modes. Given the disappearance of

that God is understood to be the sole cause (first and concurrent) of the essences and existence of all things in the universe and this essence or power is eternal, infinite, indivisible and immutable (2p10cordemsch). However, this view does, no doubt, lead to some weakening of the notion of individuality in the realm of Natura naturata.[99]

It should, hopefully, now be more apparent why our self-determination cannot be sought in the realm of corporeality. All ideas that arise from the body's inevitable affections, that is sense perception, will always be partial and inadequate. For Spinoza, our pursuit of self-determination, perfection and joy cannot be based on such uncertainty and contingency. Our self-contentment is to be discovered in the true contentment of the mind, which can only follow from that which we clearly understand.

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the Aristotelian ontology of individual natures, this shared strategy is no coincidence. Once substantial forms had been dismissed, the notion of individuality had lost its force within the *natura naturata*, so that post-Cartesian metaphysics had to search for an alternative notion of individuality and identity beyond the world of natural objects - a notion of individuality, moreover, that preserved all its traditional causal characteristics. Not surprisingly, the net result was identified by Geulincx as a basically Platonic solution'.

[99] The ontological status of particular material things is a well-known difficulty in Spinoza. For some discussion of this problem in Spinoza scholarship, see Nadler (2006: 76-80) and Viljanen (2009: 75,6). The basic difficulty seems to be how the notions of the infinite (unlimited) and the finite (limited) are to be reconciled on his thought. If particular things can be conceived as not existing, which they clearly can, then their essences do not involve existence and cannot therefore be included in God's essence. I have argued for the simplicity of God's essence and this seems to preclude any introduction of differentiation into the divine essence. The challenge is to explain how the finite expressions of God's essence are related to the infinite divine nature in Spinoza's thought. In my view, there are two routes that can be taken to solve this problem. The first is to accommodate some differentiation or limitation in God's essence and the second is to accept a weaker notion of the ontological reality of particular finite things. In my view, Spinoza rules out the first option quite decisively and I, therefore, opt for the second. Although particular things do express the divine essence in accordance with their perfection, and their essences are somehow contained in God and they do exist through God's power, they still do not 'pertain to the essence of substance' (2p10). As argued, the perception that particular things exist by there own power and are really distinct from God and each other is a conception that Spinoza attributes to sense perception. In sense perception notions such as time and measure are needed and in Spinoza's view such notions are *entis imaginationis* (Ep12). I argue that, when conceived by the intellect, which reveals the true reality of our being, the mediate infinite mode of motion and rest, i.e. the realm of particular natural things, is conceived to be infinite, indivisible and one. For Spinoza, particular things can be conceived in two ways, by sense perception or by using reason. When conceived by reason, that which is common to all bodies is conceived and the individual aspects do largely fall out of the picture (2p44cor2dem). This view does attribute a rather weak ontological status to particular things in Spinoza. As further support for this reading, I refer to another important theme in Spinoza's thought, that the emendation of the intellect leads us to a *resignation* (4app32) or a *detachment* from our own transient individual being (ST2/19 S: 89). When we use reason aright it directs us to detach from our fleeting particular being and to attach ourselves to God's intransient essence (ST2/23 S: 95). A weak notion of individuality in Spinoza's conception of particular things, as only indirect finite expressions of God's essence, is then to be expected. In my view, Spinoza reconciles the infinite and the finite in his philosophy by conceiving finite things to be only modal and not real differentiations in God's infinite essence. See Melamed (2010) for an interesting discussion of Spinoza's apparent weak notion of individuality in modes. His suggestion, with which I agree, is that 'it may well be the case that Spinoza intentionally designed the building blocks of his finite world as fuzzy units, in order to stress their inferiority to the self-subsisting, self-explaining, and well-defined substance' (ibid.: 91).

What then is the importance, if any, of particular bodies in Spinoza's task of emending the intellect? According to Spinoza we can have some degree of certainty that our bodies do exist, through sense perception (my emphasis).

> Hence it follows that man consists of mind and body, and *the human body exists according as we sense it.* (2p10cor.)

It is apparent in Spinoza that our knowledge of the body has much to do with sense perception and not the intellect. In order to know some particular thing, such as our body, we need to perceive it as related to a fixed time and place. To do this, the sensory notions of time, measure and number are required. It seems then possible to have some idea of the nature of our body through experience. For Spinoza we should not doubt the existence of our body and it is not seen to be completely unknowable, although such sensory knowledge will always be incomplete. Now with regard to the role of the body in the task of emending the intellect, it does seem that without durational bodies there would be no actual minds that think about their bodies. Koistinen makes this very important point and says that the point 'Spinoza a bit unclearly makes is that all thinking is launched by our bodies being affected by external things. Without this kind of affection we could not have knowledge of the common notions nor of the infinite essence of God, which is the starting point of the third kind of knowledge, that is, of intuitive knowledge. Thus the route to these adequate ideas is bodily based' (2009b: 187). Furthermore, the somewhat confused and obscure notion that we do have of our own body's nature, does give us some sense of identity or an idea of a self (STapp2 S: 107). As argued, this is an extremely important matter with regard to becoming more active and self-determined and plays an important role in the EIP. This matter will be taken up again in the final chapter.

In closing, Spinoza's mechanist view of the natural world can perhaps be likened to the ocean.[100] The oceans of the world can be conceived as a single undivided body

[100] Koistinen (Forthcoming b: 1) uses the same analogy to describe the relation between human beings and God in Spinoza's metaphysics. Spinoza himself uses the analogy of water in explaining the nature of extended Substance. In 1p17sch he writes: 'For example, we conceive water to be divisible and to have separate parts insofar as it is water, but not insofar as it is a material substance. In this latter respect it is not capable of separation or division. Furthermore, water, qua water, comes into existence and goes out of existence; but qua substance it does not come into existence nor go out of existence (corrumpitur)'. See also 3p59sch where Spinoza writes that human bodies are in many respects at the mercy of external causes and like waves that are tossed around by others when the sea is driven by the ocean winds.

of water with its own eternal and infinite motion. There are some necessary and eternal features that are always related to the ocean, such as water, motion, waves, etc. The relation of particular bodies to the mode of motion in matter is then perhaps similar to that between particular waves and the ocean as a whole body of water in motion. Individual waves are not entities that can be or be conceived separately from the ocean and are in essence just different motions of water. A wave is both a modification of water that follows necessarily from the motion in the ocean as a whole and also from the many actions or causes in the ocean water surrounding it. A wave cannot cause itself to exist and to continue to exist and consider itself as undetermined or as an autonomous individual thing. A particular wave is determined to exist in a certain manner by external causes and can only exist if the ocean exists and the ocean cannot exist without having some motion or waves in it. There is an infinite variety of wave types caused by the motion of the ocean, which cannot be known to us. The ocean necessarily has waves, but it can exist and be understood without a specific wave type being present at a particular time.[101] Although the appearance or face of the ocean changes all the time, in essence it is always the same, that is, just motion in water. No wave, however, can be or be conceived without the ocean and its idea.

[101] In Spinoza, God's essence is expressed in his attributes and in the modes that follow from them, both the immediate infinite and the mediate infinite modes. Both modes are absolutely necessary properties of God's attributes. However, the particular finite modes arising from the immediate mode of motion and rest seem not to be absolutely necessary. In my view, God will always have the attribute of extension, the immediate infinite mode of motion in matter and the mediate infinite mode of finite bodies that arises from the former. However, not all kinds of finite bodies will exist all of the time. If this were the case, the natures of finite modes would involve existence. Even if particular things exist necessarily when they do exist, this does not mean that their essence involves existence. Human beings, for example, have not always existed and they might go out of existence at some time, like other species before them. There will, however always be a mediate infinite mode of finite bodies, but its appearance or face will continuously change. This change in appearance, due to the absence of certain finite expressions of God's essence does not threaten Spinoza's demand that God's essence must always be fully expressed. I argue, that all particular material things, existing or not, have the same essence, in that they are a certain ratio of motion and rest. Any specific finite body, say a human one, cannot be or be conceived without the true ideas of the attribute of extension and that of motion and rest in matter, but the former can be and be conceived without a particular body. God can exist and be understood without me, but I cannot exist or be understood without God. For McCracken (1998b: 638), Spinoza undertakes to deduce *a priori* only that there are infinitely many bodies that follow from God's nature, but not the existence of some particular body.

3.2.5. Body and essence

At the beginning of this chapter I undertook to explain why Spinoza turns to the mind and not to the body, with regard to our highest good. I argue that the possibility for self-activity does not lie in the body, which seems to be wholly determined by external causes, which cannot be conceived adequately.[102] In this, the body is very different to the mind and also the reason why the body in early modern thinking is understood to be at the mercy of chance. This important difference between mind and body is what I set out to explain in this chapter. I argue that our essence as humans lies in our mind (2p11dem) and the undertaking of the EIP is the endeavor to perfect our intellect by attaining the highest level of knowledge, which is to know God intuitively. This insight produces our highest good and joy. In Spinoza, human self-contentment lies in the true contentment of the mind, i.e. that which we know with certainty to be true.

It is understandable that, for some early moderns, the new emerging mechanist vision was somewhat gloomy, especially from the perspective of human beings, when compared to the traditional prevailing worldview. In the new mechanist view there is a tremendous shift from the traditional view of humans as having a rather unique and privileged status in the world of natural material things. Human beings were traditionally seen, to be, in some sense, the image of God, with some even chosen and destined to an eternal life of bliss. The mechanist theory introduced a radically new view of human bodies as being merely a tiny part in the huge machinery of nature and saw no essential difference between the human body and any other material thing.

[102] Spinoza's EIP is focused on perfecting the human mind and it seems that it is only human minds that can be developed or emended. Why is this the case? The mind is the idea of the body and a mind that is able to know God and many other things adequately (2p47sch) must have something to with the nature of its body. In Spinoza not all bodies are the same and some are more independent than others. When discussing the human body in 2p13sch, Spinoza says that in some bodies 'the actions of one body depend on itself alone' and is less reliant 'that other bodies concur with it in its actions'. Seeing that Spinoza is dealing with human bodies in this passage, I think it fair to suggest that he deems human bodies to be of the kind that are more independent than others. The picture in Spinoza regarding bodies is actually quite positive and the body is not conceived as something completely negative to be escaped from or as a *prison* for the mind. It seems then that the ability of a mind to become self-conscious and active is related to the type of body that it is united to. The more self-determined a body is the more suited its mind will be to become active. In the *General Definition of Emotions* Spinoza writes: 'For the excellence of ideas and the actual power of thinking are measured by the excellence of the object' (S: 319). The minds of snails are rather dull, following the passive nature of snails. Minds of humans are more powerful following their body that is more self-determined. As argued, for Spinoza, the human body does have an important role to play in the development of a highly conscious and intuitive mind. This seems to have also to do with the complexity of the human body and its capacity to be affected by many things (4p38dem).

Following the analogy of the ocean, Spinoza's philosophy could be interpreted as saying that the human body is like any other body, like a wave in the ocean, just coming and going in a short matter of time. It is hardly surprising then, that Spinoza's philosophy, which implemented this mechanist theory rigorously and also introduced the radical immanentist conception of God, was fiercely opposed and regarded as a vision leading to atheist materialism.

For Spinoza however, the essence of being human is not only about being a mind. The human body is regarded as quite exceptional in that it is able to function more independently than most other bodies. The positive upshot of this is that the idea of this body will also be quite special and Spinoza's philosophy is very focused on the human mind as the main tool for achieving our highest perfection, which is to be self - determined through our given true ideas. However, although the body has an important role to play in us having adequate ideas, the essence of being human does not lie in the body, but in the mind. As argued, it is through the development of the mind or the emendation of the intellect that mankind can achieve its highest perfection and happiness and even some form of salvation and eternity.[103]

[103] Spinoza's theory of the mind's eternity will be discussed in chapter six.

4. Essence and Method in the TdIE

In the first three chapters I have outlined certain key elements in Spinoza's EIP, which I argue, is primarily aimed at devising the best method for discovering certainty in our knowledge. A second task, thus far, has been to clarify the crucial role of the notions of essence and essence monism in his method of emending the intellect. My focus and procedure in the following section of this work (chapters four, five and six) will change somewhat and the attention will mainly turn to the text of Spinoza's *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect* (TdIE). My aim in this fourth chapter is to uncover the main elements of Spinoza's rationalist method as it is developed in this early treatise.[104] Spinoza's theory of knowledge also starts to emerge in the TdIE, which will be attended to in chapter five. His theory of the mind's eternity, which he does seem to consider towards the end of the TdIE, will be the subject of chapter six. As suggested, the procedure will change somewhat in this section, in that I will now follow and discuss certain relevant sections of Spinoza's text quite closely. I aim to support my interpretation of Spinoza's method, which I have outlined in the previous chapters, with some strong textual evidence from the TdIE.

The TdIE will then be the main focus in this section, but where necessary I will also look to Spinoza's other writings for clarification on certain matters. As is known, the TdIE is an unfinished work and it is therefore necessary, to sometimes follow the further development of his thought on certain subjects, i.e. his theory of knowledge, in his other works.[105] I will also present somewhat of a comparison between Spinoza's TdIE and Descartes's *Regulae* in this section. These two early works have much in common, which I think justifies the decision to present their theories pertaining to method and knowledge in a side-by-side manner. I have indicated thus far that I understand Spinoza's method of philosophy to be a typical example of the early rationalist approach to the philosophical challenges of the early modern period, which came about largely due to the important work of Descartes. Although Spinoza does follow Descartes quite closely in certain respects, there are also some important differences in their method, which will also be attended to.

[104] Spinoza does also discuss the fictitious, the false and doubtful ideas in some detail in the TdIE. I will not attend to this matter in any detail. For my subject it suffices to know that all such ideas originate in sense perception and should be distinguished from the true ideas of the intellect (TdIE§84).
[105] This said, I am however of the opinion that the basic elements of Spinoza's method and epistemology are all present in his early work and did not change much in his later works.

4.1. Intellect and certainty

The hallmark theory, held by early modern rationalists such as Descartes, Spinoza and also Leibniz, which distinguished them quite decisively from their empiricist contemporaries, is that of innate ideas. I have spent some time explicating this theory and will not repeat the same here. It is widely accepted that it was mainly Descartes who promoted an inventive theory of the mind, which signaled a strong departure from the view of the mind held by his Aristotelian-scholastic predecessors. As discussed, a most important aspect of Descartes's theory of the human mind was his conviction that the mind is much more self-determined than what was previously thought to be the case. This belief in the mind's natural ability to produce adequate ideas and certain knowledge is the main thrust behind the desire in early modern philosophy to shed its traditional humility and to become more independent, through the true ideas of the mind. An important trait of the early rationalist view of the mind is its determination to form its *own* true ideas and not to accept and follow a given or a traditional understanding of things. The following citation from the *Regulae* captures this rationalist sentiment in Descartes quite well:

> The natural bent of my mind, I confess, is such that the greatest pleasure I have taken in my studies has always come from not accepting the arguments of others but from discovering arguments by my own efforts. It was just this that attracted me to the study of the sciences while I was still in my youth. (CSM I: 35.)

The *Regulae* is filled with declarations reflecting Descartes's appreciation of the human intellect and his conviction of its pivotal role in the pursuit of certitude is evident. I have gathered a few short citations from this work to illustrate this central belief, which so characterizes early rationalist thought (my emphasis):

> … nothing can be known prior to the intellect, since knowledge of everything else depends on the intellect, and not vice versa. (Ibid.: 30.)

> … there can be no truth or falsity in the strict sense except in the intellect alone. (Ibid.: 30.)

> Within ourselves we are aware that, while *it is the intellect alone that is capable of knowledge*[106], it can be helped or hindered by three other faculties, *viz.* imagination, sense perception, and memory. (Ibid.: 32.)

If we now turn to Spinoza's TdIE, the likeness with Descartes's view of the intellect is quite striking. I will illustrate this in what follows with a sampling of important texts from the TdIE. The first citation gives a good illustration of the commitment among these early rationalists to the intellect and it also contains an analogy that was commonly used in this period with regard to the human mind. This text is rather important in that all the basic elements of Spinoza's method of emending the intellect are found in it:

> But the fact is that at first, with the tools they were born with, men succeeded, however laboriously and imperfectly, in making some very simple things; and when these were made they made other more complex things with less labor and greater perfection; and thus advancing gradually from the simplest works to the making of tools, and from tools to other works and other tools, they have reached a point where they can make very many complex things with little labor. In just the same way the intellect by its inborn power makes intellectual tools for itself by which it acquires other powers for other intellectual works, and from these works still other tools – or capacity for further investigation – and thus makes steady progress until it reaches the summit of wisdom.
>
> That this is the case with the intellect will readily be seen, provided we understand what is the method of seeking the truth, and what are those innate tools which are all the intellect needs for making other tools from them as to progress further. (TdIE§31-32.)

The key distinction between the intellect and the imagination or sense perception, so common in early modern rationalist thought, is also evident in Spinoza:

[106] *Scientia* is the term used in the original text, which is Descartes's term for certain, or scientific knowledge based on indubitable foundations (CSM I: 10).

> Or if you wish, you may understand by imagination whatever you please, as long as it is something different from the intellect, and that the soul is passive to it. It matters not how you understand it, now that we know that it is something random, and that the soul is passive to it, while we also know how we may be delivered from it with the aid of the intellect. (Ibid.§84.)

One of the clearest commitments of Spinoza to the early rationalist theory of the mind is found towards the end of the treatise, where he lists the properties of the intellect. The following citation from this list captures the core rationalist conviction of the intellect:[107]

> That it involves certainty; that is, it knows that things are in reality as they are contained in the intellect in the form of thought. (Ibid.§108.)

The above is enough confirmation that the theory of the true innate ideas of the intellect is a core belief in early rationalist thought and that Descartes and Spinoza both employ it quite strongly and in much the same way in their early work. I argue that Spinoza's TdIE is specifically tasked to further develop this theory and to incorporate it as a key doctrine in the very heart of his philosophical program.

The early modern philosophical *quest for certainty* has been introduced and I argue that Descartes and Spinoza participated in this overall project. There were at least two main issues in the early modern period that fuelled this search and need for epistemological certitude. I have referred to the research of Toulmin and to his finding that the untenable situation arising from the serious religious and other strife in this time called for some direction in order to discover truth and certainty.[108] There was however also a second concern, that arose and followed in the wake of the new mechanist view of the natural world, which also figures rather strongly in the development of the new rationalist theory of the mind. It was mentioned towards the end of the last chapter, that the new mechanist theory of the material world delivered a quite telling blow to the long-standing way in which the position or status of human

[107] Spinoza's complete list of the properties of the intellect will be dealt with later on in this chapter.
[108] This matter was briefly introduced in the introductory chapter. See Toulmin (2009) for more detail on this subject.

beings in the world was understood. With the steady weakening of the customary view of God's providence, that was furthered eroded by the discoveries of the new science, an unsettling view started to emerge in this period that the human body was like any other material thing. The human body was seen to also be a small and insignificant part of the huge machinery of the corporeal world and as largely at the mercy of powerful natural forces.[109] As seen, the new mechanist view of corporeality challenged the established view of human beings (body and mind) as having a somewhat privileged place in our world. This development in the early modern world-view, raised the question if the human mind was able to supply some form of certainty to perhaps counter the apparent precarious position of the body in the material world, or was the mind itself also at the mercy of external forces? To better understand the response of Spinoza to the situation described above, we need to turn to a very important letter that he wrote in 1666 to a close friend of his, Johan Bouwmeester, who was a medical doctor and also an interested member of Spinoza's close philosophical discussion group (Nadler 1999:173). Bouwmeester was, seemingly, perplexed by similar thoughts to those mentioned above and wrote to Spinoza in this regard. It is in *letter 37* that we find Spinoza's response. This correspondence is quite important in my opinion in that it gives some interesting and relevant contextual background information, which helps to better understand the important philosophical questions of the day and also gives a clear and concise explanation by Spinoza of his method of philosophical enquiry.[110] It is therefore worth quoting a section of the letter in full:

> I pass on to your question, which is as follows: whether there is or can be a method such that thereby we can make sure and unwearied progress in the study of things of the highest importance; or whether our minds, like our bodies, are at the mercy of chance, and our thoughts are governed more by fortune than by skill. I think I shall give a satisfactory answer if I show that there must necessarily be a method whereby we can direct and interconnect our clear and distinct perceptions, and that the intellect is not, like the body, at the mercy of

[109] There were many practical problems threatening human society in early modern times and the human mind was seen as a key element in discovering scientific knowledge that could help to alleviate them. Social problems such as credulity, a lack in education, poor health, poverty and natural disasters were some of the challenges of the day (TdIE§15,17).

[110] *Letter 37* is also important for a better understanding of the TdIE, with which it is associated (TdIE§18).

> chance. This is established simply from the following consideration, that one clear and distinct perception, or several taken together, can be absolutely the cause of another clear and distinct perception. Indeed, all the clear and distinct perceptions that we form can arise only from other clear and distinct perceptions which are in us, and they acknowledge no other cause outside us. Hence it follows that the clear and distinct perceptions that we form depend only on our nature and its definite and fixed laws, that is, on our power itself alone, and not on chance, that is, on causes which, although acting likewise by definite and fixed laws, are yet unknown to us and foreign to our nature and power. As for the other perceptions, I do admit that they depend in the highest degree on chance. From this it is quite clear what a true method must be and in which it should especially consist, namely, solely in the knowledge of pure intellect and its nature and laws. To acquire this, we must first of all distinguish between intellect and imagination, that is, between true ideas and the other – fictitious, false, doubtful, and, in sum, all ideas which depend only on memory. To understand these things, at least as far as the method requires, there is no need to get to know the nature of mind through its first cause; it is enough to formulate a brief account of the mind or its perceptions in the manner expounded by Verulam. I think that in these few words I have explained and demonstrated the true method, and at the same time shown the way to attain it. It remains, however, for me to advise you that for all this there is needed constant meditation and a most steadfast mind and purpose, to acquire which it is most important to establish a fixed way and manner of life, and to have a definite aim in view. (Ep37.)

The above citation contains much of importance regarding certain aspects of Spinoza's thought that my work is focused on. Firstly, our bodies are understood by both Bouwmeester and Spinoza to be 'at the mercy of chance.' This view reflects the mechanist view of the material world already discussed. In this view, particular material things or bodies are completely determined by natural forces, largely beyond human control. For Spinoza, this conclusion has to do with the rationalist approach, that, since certain knowledge of the durational realm of particular material bodies is beyond our cognitive reach, this order can, for all intents and purposes, be considered

as beyond our control and therefore as contingent.[111] Spinoza seems to have held this view throughout his philosophical career and argues in much the same way in the much later Political Treatise (TP):

> So if something in Nature appears to us a ridiculous, absurd or evil, this is due to the fact that our knowledge is only partial, that we are for the most part ignorant of the order and coherence of Nature as a whole, and that we want all things to be directed as our reason prescribes. Yet that which our reason declares to be evil is not evil in respect of the order and laws of universal Nature, but only in respect of our own particular nature. (TP2 S: 685.)

In his letter to Henry Oldenburg of the Royal Society, Spinoza makes a similar point:

> As to knowing the actual manner of this coherence and the agreement of each part with the whole, I made it clear in my previous letter that this is beyond my knowledge. To know this it would be necessary to know the whole of Nature and all its parts. (Ep32.)

Recall from *letter 37*, quoted above, that the kind of knowledge associated with the durational existence of the body, the imagination, is also seen to 'depend to highest degree on chance'. This kind of knowledge is associated with the body and stems from it being affected in many ways by external forces. The sensory ideas of these affections are seen to be confused and partial, in that they reflect more of the affected state of our body than that of the bodies affecting us. For Spinoza we cannot have adequate knowledge of our own body nor of other bodies. Our mind has seemingly little or no control over the whole process of sense perception and is not able to make clear sense of these body based ideas. For this reason, Spinoza claims that we do not have certain knowledge of an influential part of our mind, i.e. the imagination

[111] Spinoza says as much in the TTP4: 'Furthermore, we plainly have no knowledge as to the actual co-ordination and interconnection of things – that is, the way in which things are in actual fact ordered and connected – so that for practical purposes it is better, indeed, it is essential, to consider things as contingent' (S: 427). Spinoza says, in even stronger terms, that the chain of causes that bring about the existence of natural bodies is 'hidden' from us (1p33sch1). In Spinoza contingency boils down to having inadequate or partial knowledge of things. In reality for Spinoza, however, there is no contingency whatsoever (1p29). It is only our knowledge of this realm that is partial and, therefore, things appear to be contingent (2p31cor).

(2p29sch). For Descartes and Spinoza, there is no certainty to be found in sense perception and experience and it receives a rather low rating. The human passions are also closely associated with our inadequate ideas. I argue then, that the pursuit of certainty in early rationalist epistemology, had to change its course of direction to focus on the ideas of the essence of things, which, could be known with complete certainty.

Another point, worth highlighting in Spinoza's letter to his friend, is that the nature of thought is seen to be quite different to that of extension and also as governed by different laws. Spinoza writes there that the laws of motion-and-rest are not only 'unknown' to our minds, but are also 'foreign to our nature and power'. Spinoza is here clearly propounding the early rationalist theory of the intellect and also that our highest human good is not associated with the body, but with the mind. As claimed earlier, this statement is in accordance with Spinoza's view as found in his other works and in the *Ethics*, that 'the essence of man' is not to be sought in the body, but in 'modes of thinking' (2p11dem). I argue that the early rationalist view that human essence is closely related to the intellect is best understood against the background of the new mechanist theory of corporeality. Because the body is regarded as highly insecure, the intellect is seen by Spinoza to be man's *better part* and, indeed, as his essence, i.e. the best means of finding his highest good in the true contentment that only certain knowledge can offer. Not surprisingly this line of thinking in Spinoza's correspondence is also found in the TdIE:

> …as far as I know, they never conceived the soul, as we are doing, as acting according to fixed laws, a sort of spiritual automaton.
>
> For we know that the operations by which imaginings are produced are subject to laws which are quite different from the laws of the intellect, and that in relation to imagining, the soul has only a passive role. (TdIE§85, 86.)

Spinoza makes it quite clear in his letter that the correct method of emending the intellect has to do with clear and distinct ideas, only:

> Our aim, then, is to have clear and distinct ideas, such as originate from pure mind and not from the fortuitous motions of the body. (Ibid.§91.)

I argue that the pursuit of certitude in Descartes and Spinoza has by and large turned its back on ideas based on sense perception alone and is mainly focused on attaining true and certain knowledge of the universal and common essence of things, by means of the intellect.

4.2. Reflexive knowledge

In line with early modern mechanism, Spinoza regards all particular things, human beings included, to be a part of nature and therefore determined by external forces to follow a passive kind of existence. For Spinoza, human beings are mostly not able to live in accordance with reason and to actively employ their intellect at all times. This is not seen to be their fault and is mostly the outcome of the influence of forces beyond their control. In the *Political Treatise* Spinoza writes '…that it is no more in our power to have a sound mind than to have a sound body' (TP3 S: 684). This view is also found in the TdIE:

> …we shall have to declare that there are men whose minds are also blinded either from birth or by reason of their prejudices, that is, through some accident that has befallen them. For they are not even aware of their own selves. If they affirm or doubt something, they do not know that they are doubting or affirming. (TdIE§47.)

> If a proof is presented to them, they do not know whether the argumentation is valid or not. If they deny, grant or oppose, they do not know that they deny, grant or oppose. So they must be regarded as automata, completely lacking in mind. (Ibid.§48.)

Nevertheless, Spinoza does seem to think that some of us, with the necessary resolve, are able to undertake the EIP successfully, to live in accordance with reason and to find true contentment and even eternal joy. It has been discussed that the process of becoming rational is not seen by Spinoza to be something that develops naturally and of its own accord in humans. To the contrary, for Spinoza humans are mostly inclined to follow their inadequate sensory ideas and the ensuing beliefs and passions.

Therefore, in order to make progress in the EIP and to successfully emend our intellect we need to follow a certain method. A haphazard approach to the EIP is doomed to failure. Recall Spinoza's closing thoughts in *letter 37*:

> It remains, however, for me to advise you that for all this there is needed constant meditation and a most steadfast mind and purpose, to acquire which it is most important to establish a fixed way and manner of life, and to have a definite aim in view.

The method required to achieve our highest human good, will be the focus of the following section. As said, the hallmark of early modern rationalist thinking is the view that the human mind is naturally endowed with true ideas and, not surprisingly, it is to these innate tools that Spinoza turns to form the indubitable basis for his method of emending the intellect.

4.2.1. The idea of an idea

The first aspect of Spinoza's method as found in the TdIE is his notion of *reflexive knowledge* or *the idea of an idea*:

> … method is nothing but reflexive knowledge, or the idea of an idea; and because there is no idea of an idea unless there is first an idea, there will be no method unless there is first an idea. So a good method will be one which shows how the mind is directed according to the standard of a given true idea. (TdIE§38.)

The method of reflexive knowledge in Spinoza involves distinguishing between the many different ideas that constitute our minds.[112] For Spinoza, some of the ideas in our minds are clear and distinct, whereas others are confused and obscure. His method

[112] Spinoza's method of reflexive knowledge is, in my view, quite different to Descartes's method of radical doubt. Doubt plays little or no part in Spinoza's method. He does not seem to think that we can, in good faith, doubt our true ideas. This theory is explained in much the same terms in the *Ethics*: 'And who, pray, can know that he understands something unless he first understands it? That is, who can know that he is certain of something unless he is fist certain of it? Again, what standard of truth can there be that is clearer and more certain than a true idea?' (2p43sch).

aims to develop our ability to differentiate between our adequate and inadequate ideas and to understand the essential difference between them. A crucial first step in the EIP is to become *aware* of our true ideas and to understand their nature and what they signify. Once this basic step has taken place, the mind will certainly know what a true idea is and, by this standard, will be able to distinguish between its true ideas and others in the mind that are inadequate:

> … there must first of all exist in us a true idea as an innate tool, and together with the understanding of this idea there would likewise be an understanding of the difference between this perception and all other perceptions. Herein consists one part of our method. (Ibid.§39.)

In Spinoza's method, the given true ideas of the mind are the key intellectual tools used in the process of emending the intellect and in purifying it of the influence of its uncertain sensory notions. As argued earlier, the true ideas of the intellect, include the adequate ideas of God's essence, the attributes and the common notions. Inadequate ideas refer to sensory ideas that arise in the mind as the body is affected by outside forces. The first goal of the method of *idea reflexiva*:

> …is the understanding of what is a true idea, distinguishing it from other kinds of perceptions and examining its nature, so that we may thereby come to know our own power of understanding and may train the mind that it will understand according to this standard all that it needs to be understood, laying down definite rules as aids, and also ensuring that the mind does not waste its energy on useless pursuits. (Ibid.§37.)

For Spinoza becoming aware that our minds do possess true ideas and understanding what this signifies, amounts to having certainty about such ideas. Certainty in Spinoza is not something that is later added to our true ideas.[113] Having certitude and possessing true ideas amounts to the same thing:

[113] The matter of certainty in our ideas will be discussed in the following chapter.

> And from this again it is evident that for the certainty of truth no other sign is needed but to have a true idea. For as we have shown, in order to know, there is no need for me to know that I know. From this, again, it is clear that no one can know what the highest certainty is unless he has an adequate idea or the objective essence of some thing. For certainty and objective essence are the same. (Ibid.§35).

4.2.2. Simple ideas

Spinoza's theory of given true ideas, is clearly an indispensable element in his method of emending the intellect. However, strange as this may seem, this theory appears to not really play an important role in the interpretation of his philosophy.[114] A possible reason, for the theory of simple ideas seemingly not being taken seriously in scholarship, is that Spinoza does often use different terminology in this regard, such as the term *common notions*, which is used in the *Ethics*. This has, perhaps, resulted in this theory not being easily recognizable in his later works. I argue that the theory of simple ideas plays a crucial role in Spinoza's philosophy throughout his writings and is especially important for his method of emending the intellect. I will attempt to justify this claim in this section. The theory of simple natures and ideas has been introduced and discussed in the preceding chapters and I will not repeat anything unnecessary in here. My aim is to give some textual evidence in support of my claim. I will firstly highlight this theory in Descartes's *Regulae* and thereafter refer to Spinoza's TdIE.

Descartes's theory of simple natures and ideas is one of his most important foundational theories and forms the backbone of his rationalist method. I will firstly give a presentation of Descartes's theory, which will be brief, seeing that this theory has already received some attention. Descartes gives an important summary of his rationalist method in Rule 6 of the *Regulae*:

> In order to be able to do this (devise a method, my addition) correctly, we should note first that everything with regard to its possible usefulness to our

[114] Steinberg (2009: 157) for example, says that for Spinoza 'there are no ideas or bits of knowledge that are certain or justified independent of, and prior to, the justification of others, and from which the certainty or justification of all others is derived'. Wilson (1996) does not refer to *simple ideas* at all. In Joachim (1948) the theory of simple ideas is named and it does receive some attention.

project, may be termed either ‘absolute’ or ‘relative’ – our project being not to inspect the isolated natures of things, but to compare them with each other so that some may be known on the basis of others.

I call ‘absolute’ whatever has within it the pure and simple nature in question; that is, whatever is viewed as being independent, a cause, simple, universal, single, equal, similar, straight, and other qualities of that sort. I call this the simplest and the easiest thing when we can make use of it in solving problems.

The ‘relative’, on the other hand, is what shares the same nature, or at least something of the same nature, in virtue of which we can relate it to the absolute and deduce it from the absolute in a definite series of steps. The concept of the ‘relative’ involves other terms besides, which I call ‘relations’: these include whatever is said to be dependent, an effect, composite, particular, many, unequal, dissimilar, oblique, etc. (CSM I: 21-2.)

The theory of simple natures and ideas is also found in Rule 12:

That is why, since we are concerned here with things only in so far as they are perceived by the intellect, we term ‘simple’ only those things which we know so clearly and distinctly that they cannot be divided by the mind into others which are more distinctly known. Shape, extension and motion, etc. are of this sort; all the rest we conceive to be in a sense composed out of these. (Ibid.: 44.)

Those simple natures which the intellect recognizes by means of a sort of innate light, without the aid of any corporeal image, are purely intellectual. (Ibid.: 45.)

The ideas of these simple natures are:

… self evident and never contain any falsity … For this reason, it is evident that we are mistaken if we ever judge that we lack complete knowledge of any of these simple natures … For if we have even the slightest grasp of it in our mind - which we surely must have, on the assumption that we are making a

> judgement about it - it must follow that we have complete knowledge of it. (Ibid.: 45.)[115]

To this Descartes then adds:

> …it is not possible for us ever to understand anything beyond those simple natures and a certain mixture or compounding of one with another. (Ibid.: 46.)

The upshot of this situation is that:

> …we need take no great pains to discover these simple natures, because they are self evident enough. (Ibid.: 48.)

His conclusion then is:

> …the whole of human knowledge consists uniquely in our achieving a distinct perception of how all these simple natures contribute to the composition of other things. (Ibid.: 49.)

The main points of Descartes's theory can be summarized as follows. Firstly, there are certain features in natural things that are universal and common to all things, such as being extended, having a certain size and shape and being in motion and at rest. These common features or simple natures and their properties are, secondly, expressed in all natural things and also in our ideas of them. Seeing that these simple ideas are necessarily involved in all our ideas of things, such ideas will be complete in the mind and will be clear and distinct. Such ideas cannot be discovered by sense perception and are only conceived by the intellect, to which they are innate and, in a sense, self-evident. It is only of such simple natures that the mind can form clear and distinct ideas, which are also termed simple ideas. In Descartes the focus of *scientia* or scientific knowledge is to attain certitude by discovering and employing these

[115] This aspect of the theory of simple ideas is especially important for Spinoza's EIP. It has been discussed that the EIP is deemed necessary because the mind is negatively influenced by inadequate ideas that have even obscured its true ideas. However, this does not mean that the innate light of reason has been completely distinguished. For Descartes and Spinoza it is impossible that we do not have any grasp at all of our innate ideas. Because such ideas are deemed to be completely simple, even the slightest grasp will result in an adequate idea. This theory lays the foundation for the EIP.

adequate ideas. Thirdly, simple ideas are not mere entities of reason (entia rationis), but are conceived to be adequate ideas of simple natures that really exist, but in a different way to things that exist durationally. The conviction that such simple natures exist is an intellectual insight. This conclusion is in line with the early rationalist dictum that *whatever is true is something*. Simple natures have a self-subsisting type of nature and are referred to in theological terms as true and immutable, *divine* natures or essences. As argued in Descartes and Spinoza, God's essence is conceived to be completely simple.[116] It is to these simple natures that the intellect relates when it knows clearly and distinctly (Carriero 2009: 5).

I have no doubt that a very similar theory is found in Spinoza's TdIE and that his rationalist method of emending the intellect employs a Cartesian type theory of simple natures and ideas. To support this claim I will firstly give a selection of the many references in the TdIE to the doctrine of simple natures and ideas. This theory has been discussed in some detail already and my purpose here is only to present some textual proof of the strong presence of this theory in Spinoza's early treatise on the emendation of the intellect:

> Then again, since a fictitious idea cannot be clear and distinct but only confused, and since all confusion arises from mind's having only partial knowledge of a complete whole or a unity composed of many constituents – failing to distinguish between the known and the unknown, and also attending at the same time without any distinction to the many constituents contained in a single thing – it follows, first, that if the idea is of a thing completely simple, it can only be clear and distinct. For such a thing would have to be known not in part, but either wholly or not at all. Secondly, it follows that if a thing composed of many constituents is divided in thought into all its simplest parts, and attention is given to each part separately, then all confusion will disappear. Thirdly, it follows that a fictitious idea cannot be simple, but is formed by the blending of various confused ideas of various things and actions existing in nature; or, as better expressed, fiction results from attending at the same time, without assent, to various ides of this kind. For if fiction were simple, it would

[116] The theory of simplicity also figures in the early rationalist proof of the unity of God, that there is only one God. Things that exist as a plurality are produced by external causes and not by their own nature. Something that exists by virtue of its own nature is necessarily simple. Spinoza also employs this argument in his *letter 34*.

> be clear and distinct, and consequently true. And if it were formed from the blending of distinct ideas, their composition would also be clear and distinct, and therefore true. (TdIE§63-4.)

I specifically refer, at this point, to the terminology used in the above citation, which mostly accompanies the use of the theory of simple natures and ideas in early modern rationalist thought. This refers to the description of something as being *equal in the part as in the whole.* For Joachim, Spinoza conceives an idea as 'simple if its ideatum is simple; for then it is the commensurate apprehension of a reality indiscerptibly single, i.e. such that it must be conceived entirely or not at all' (1940: 130). Joachim's description of something simple as *indiscerptibly single* is very important and correct, in my view. It is telling that the phraseology referred to above is also found in the second part of Spinoza's *Ethics*:

> That which is common to all things (see Lemma 2 above) and is equally in the part as in the whole does not constitute the essence of any one particular thing. (2p37.)

> Those things that are common to all things and are equally in the part as in the whole can be conceived only adequately. (2p38.)[117]

> Therefore, that which gives knowledge of the eternal and infinite essence of God is common to all things, and equally in the part as in the whole. And so this knowledge will be adequate (2p38). (2p46dem.)

Note moreover, that the above citations from the *Ethics* are taken from the section in which Spinoza presents his theory of adequate ideas. I regard this all as strong support for my contention that the theory of simple natures and ideas does continue to be employed by Spinoza in the *Ethics* and throughout his writings. As does Descartes, Spinoza also distinguishes simple ideas from sensory ideas and also associates the former exclusively with the intellect:

[117] See also 2p39 and the later TTP7 where Spinoza describes his method as aimed at trying to 'discover those features that are most universal and common to the whole of Nature, to wit, motion-and-rest and the rules and laws governing them which Nature always observes and through which she constantly acts' (S: 460).

> … a completely simple thing cannot be the object of fiction, but only of intellect. (TdIE§65.)

Spinoza, as did Descartes, forges a strong association between adequate or clear and distinct and simple ideas and for both it is *only* of simple natures that adequate or clear and distinct ideas can be formed. I claim that the early rationalist for attaining certitude in our knowledge includes the theory of simple natures as one of its core doctrines and that this is also so with regard to Spinoza's method. I suffice with a last quotation from the TdIE:

> But ideas which are clear and distinct can never be false; for ideas of things which are clearly and distinctly conceived either are absolutely simple or are compounded of absolutely simple ideas – that is, deduced from absolutely simple ideas. But that an absolutely simple idea cannot be false is obvious to everyone, provided he knows what is truth or understanding, and likewise what is falsity. (Ibid.§68.)

The best examples of such simple ideas in Spinoza's system are the adequate ideas of the attributes, which express God's simple, i.e. his *indiscertibly single* essence. For example, the idea of extension[118] is such a simple idea and is self-evidently true because the idea of extension is completely present in each and every idea of a body, or a part of it or the affections thereof, that the mind has (2p38dem).

To end this section, I refer to an interesting explanation that Spinoza gives of how such simple ideas can be put to work to produce adequate knowledge, i.e. his example of the rotating semi circle (TdIE§72). In this case the cause of a sphere is conceived to be a rotating semi circle and, for Spinoza, this can then be considered to be a true idea, formed by the mind combining two different simple ideas (that of a semi circle and of motion) adequately. The idea of a rotating semi circle would be false if it were seen in isolation from its cause (Joachim 1940: 96). This is because the idea of motion is not contained in the idea of a semi circle, when regarded on its own, nor does the idea of motion include the idea of a semi circle. However, when these two simple

[118] Descartes also uses the idea of extension as an example of a simple nature (CSM I: 44).

ideas, i.e., the idea of motion and the idea of a semi circle, are combined by the intellect to be the cause of a sphere, then this compounded simple idea is adequate and certain.

4.2.3. Deduction

In the *Regulae* Descartes distinguishes between two basic actions of the intellect, that of, intuition and deduction (CSM I: 14). For Descartes, the first act of *intuition* is the indubitable conception of the mind, which is easy and distinct and leaves no room for doubt about what is understood. This action, he says, proceeds solely from the natural light of reason. As seen in the previous section, such intuitive knowledge pertains to simple ideas and this type of knowledge, for Descartes, has a *direct* nature, that is, without reasoning taking place.

The second act of *deduction* is described by Descartes as 'the inference of something as following necessarily from some other propositions which are known with certainty' (ibid.: 15). This second action is deemed necessary since there are in actual fact very few absolutely simple ideas from which one can proceed. Absolutely simple ideas are seen to contain other true ideas, which can be inferred or deduced from the former by the intellect. This is another very important element in early modern rationalist method and is used quite extensively by Spinoza. A good example is that he perceives the idea of motion in matter to be contained in and therefore to follow necessarily from the idea of an extended substance (TdIE§108). As argued earlier, the principle applied by Descartes in deduction is that 'some things can be known on the basis of others' (CSM I: 21). This method entails, further, that the natures of such things, which cannot be known through themselves, i.e. in isolation from one another other, can only be known in relation to each other or, which is the same, on the basis of others, (ibid.). In Spinoza, for example, God's essence, i.e. his power, is known directly. All created things will receive their essence from God, who is the proximate cause of such essence. The latter does not refer to the individual nature of some created thing. Something's essence, as I mainly use the term in this work, denotes its simple or inmost nature and it is this nature that is inferred or deduced from God's essence. Spinoza infers the simple or inmost nature of all things to be their conatus, which is to persist in their being. The idea of the conatus is

contained in the idea of God's essence, i.e. his power, from which it can be deduced. This type of action clearly has more of an *indirect* nature and some reasoning is required. The notion of an intellectual order is also important in deduction. Absolutely simple ideas cannot be divided into ideas that are more basic and have an absolute character and rank the highest. Such ideas are the basic building blocks for a system of indubitable knowledge. From such ideas the intellect or reason is able to deduce other ideas that are contained in the absolute ones and to connect all the true ideas in an intellectual order, in such a manner that the first can be reached by passing through all the intermediate ones from bottom to top and vice versa:

> The 'relative', on the other hand, is what shares the same nature, or at least something of the same nature, in virtue of which we can relate it to the absolute and deduce it from the absolute in a definite series of steps. The concept of the 'relative' involves other terms besides, which I call 'relations': these include whatever is said to be dependent, an effect, composite, particular, many, unequal, dissimilar, oblique, etc. The further removed from the absolute such relative attributes are, the more mutually dependent relations of this sort they contain. This rule points out that all these relations should be distinguished, and the interconnections between them, and their natural order, should be noted, so that given the last term we should be able to reach the one that is absolute in the highest degree, by passing through all the intermediate ones. (Ibid.: 21-2.)

I have argued throughout that Spinoza employs the basic method developed by Descartes in his own philosophy. I will attempt to further justify this claim by showing that Spinoza also employs the second element of *deduction* in his method as developed in the TdIE. Some clear statements of this are the following (my emphasis):

> It is evident that, for the human mind to reproduce a faithful image of Nature, *it must draw all its ideas from that idea which represents the source and origin of the whole of Nature*, so that this may likewise become the source of other ideas. (TdIE§42.)

> But ideas which are clear and distinct can never be false; for ideas of things which are clearly and distinctly conceived either are absolutely simple or are compounded of absolutely simple ideas – that is, *deduced* from absolutely simple ideas. (Ibid.§68.)

> For the nature and virtue of that light consists essentially in this, *that by a process of logical deduction that which is hidden is inferred and concluded from what is known, or given as known.* That is exactly what our method requires. (TTP7 S: 467.)

From the above I think it is quite clear that Spinoza follows Descartes's basic method[119] quite closely and that he includes deduction as an integral part into his own method. However, this second element in the method of reflexive knowledge, namely, deduction, applies only to our adequate ideas. Inadequate ideas are mutilated, partial and fragmentary and cannot be deduced from true ideas nor can they be connected in any intellectual order. As argued (my emphasis):

> Thus we have distinguished between the true ideas and other perceptions, and we have established that the fictitious, the false, and other ideas have their origin in the imagination, that is, in certain sensations that are (so to speak) *fortuitous and unconnected,* arising not from the power of the mind but from

[119] There is a third element in Descartes's method as found in the *Regulae*, which is not dealt with in the TdIE but does seem to be present in Spinoza's notion of intuition found in his later works. In Rule 11 we read that after the actions of intuition and deduction have been performed there is a third action that needs to be done to complete the method of knowing things adequately. Descartes describes this final action as follows: 'If, after intuiting a number of simple propositions, we deduce something else from them, it is useful to run through them in a continuous and completely uninterrupted train of thought, to reflect on their relations to one another, and to form a distinct and, as far as possible, simultaneous conception of several of them. For in this way our knowledge becomes much more certain, and our mental capacity is enormously increased' (CSM I: 37). In short, the aim of this final intuitive sweep is to intuit a proposition with all its deductions *as a whole* by grasping the relations of the different elements to each other. To do this adequately the place, share or proportion of each element in relation to the whole must be intuited. As Descartes says 'the greatest advantage of this Rule lies in the fact that by reflecting on the mutual dependence of simple propositions we acquire the habit of distinguishing at a glance what is more, and what is less, relative, and by what steps the relative may be reduced to the absolute'. One of the functions of intuition in Spinoza is to develop an intellectual vision in which particular things are viewed in their efflux from eternity or *sub specie aeternitatis*. To intuit the whole adequately, the relative importance, share or proportion of each unique individual element, in relation to each other and the whole must be intuited. Spinoza's statement: 'that everything in Nature involves and expresses the conception of God in proportion to its essence and perfection' is, perhaps, an example of such an intuitive vision (TTP4 S: 428).

> external causes, in accordance as the body, dreaming or waking, receives various motions. (TdIE§84.)

4.2.4. Other innate tools

Apart from the given true ideas discussed above, there are also other important intellectual tools that Spinoza develops in the TdIE, which play an important role in his rationalist method. Spinoza regards the intellect as able to produce a variety of intellectual tools for itself in order to make progress 'until it reaches the summit of wisdom' (ibid.§31). In the TdIE, Spinoza refers to such other tools of the intellect as basic principles or axiomatic truths[120], of which he gives the following description:

> For a thought is also said to be true when it involves as its object the essence of some basic principle which is uncaused and is known through itself and in itself.
> Therefore the specific character of a true thought must be intrinsic to the thought itself without reference to other thoughts. Nor does it acknowledge its object as cause, but must depend on the very power and nature of the intellect. (Ibid.§70-1.)

Such universal axiomatic truths are highly regarded in Spinoza and he seems to regard them as even more important and evident than the idea of God. In the chapter on miracles in the TTP he states that:

> Since God's existence is not self-evident, it must necessarily be inferred from axiomatic truths which are so firm and incontrovertible that there can neither be, nor be conceived, any power that could call them into question…For if we could conceive that these axiomatic truths themselves can be impugned by any power, of whatever kind it be, then we should doubt their truth and

[120] To this class belong the many principles and axioms used by the early rationalists, such as the principle of sufficient reason (1p11) and the identity of indiscernibles. The best examples of axioms are found in the opening passages of E1 and also in the rest of the *Ethics*. Such axiomatic truths are understood by the early rationalist to be innate to the mind. For a discussion of Spinoza's use of other elements, such as postulates, propositions, proofs, scholia, and lemmata in the *Ethics*, see Nadler (2006: 43-51).

> consequently the conclusion following therefrom, namely God's existence; nor could we ever be certain of anything…and all our apprehensions of every kind must be called into doubt. (TTP6 S: 447.)

For Spinoza, 'such a belief would cast doubt on everything, and would lead to atheism' (S: 448). It is notable from the above citation from the TdIE, that Spinoza describes such axioms as *uncaused,* and ideas known *through itself and in itself*, which are all terms usually reserved to conceive God's essence. Evidently, such axioms are seen by Spinoza to be contained in and to follow from the innate idea of God.[121]

4.3. Definitions

The second part of Spinoza's method of emending the intellect has to do with 'getting to know the conditions of a good definition, and then devising a way to discover them' (TdIE§94). It seems that reflexive knowledge on its own, cannot produce the adequate starting point that Spinoza seeks and that some help from reasoning is needed. Definitions[122] play a very important role in Spinoza's rationalist method and become especially so in the production of the all - important starting point for his philosophical system. In this respect, Spinoza develops his method quite differently from that of Descartes, who does not assign the same role to definitions in his work and advocate their use. In the *Principles of Philosophy* Descartes writes:

> I have often noticed that philosophers make the mistake of employing logical definitions in an attempt to explain what was already very simple and self – evident; the result is that they only make matters more obscure. (CSM I: 195-6.)

[121] Descartes also mentions other intellectual tools, such as axioms, that are required in his method. In Rule 12 of the *Regulae* we find the following: 'To this class (simple natures) we must also refer those common notions which are, as it were, links which connect other simple natures together, and whose self evidence is the basis for all the rational inferences we make. Examples of these are: 'Things that are the same as a third thing are the same as each other'; 'Things that cannot be related in the same way to a third thing are different in some respect' (CSM I: 45).

[122] Spinoza seems to have been influenced with regard to the use and nature of definitions that he employs in his method by Hobbes and Heereboord (De Dijn 1974: 41-50).

In the TdIE the true idea of God is seen to play a crucial role in getting Spinoza's rationalist system underway. For Spinoza his method 'would be most perfect when we possessed the idea of a most perfect Being. So at the outset this must be our chief objective, to arrive at the knowledge of such a Being as speedily as possible' (TdIE§49). This requirement of an early rationalist method, i.e. the possession of an anchoring perfect idea, is repeated towards the end of the treatise:

> As to the ordering of all our perceptions and their proper arrangement and unification, it is required that, as soon as is possible and reason demands, we should ask whether there is a being – and also what kind of being – which is the cause of all things so that its essence represented in thought is also the cause of all our ideas. Then our mind, as we have said, will reproduce Nature as closely as possible; for it will possess in the form of thought the essence, order and unity of Nature. (Ibid.§99.)

However, as mentioned, Spinoza did not regard the idea of God to be completely self - evident. Spinoza's solution to this problem is quite different to that of Descartes in that he does not resort to the *cogito ergo sum* solution[123], but takes the route of employing true definitions:

> So the correct path to discovery is to develop our thinking from the basis of some given definition, and progress will be more successful and easier as a thing is better defined. (Ibid.§94.)

For Spinoza then the best method of initiating his philosophical project is by means of true definitions, which are Spinoza's absolute starting points (Nadler 1999: 227). The use of definitions becomes especially important towards the end of the TdIE, where Spinoza moves toward discovering the idea of the most perfect Being or God to start and anchor his system.

Spinoza firstly deals with the *nature* of definitions and says that a good definition must 'explain the inmost essence of something and must take care not to substitute for

[123] Descartes's method of radical doubt leads to the realization that he is a thinking substance and that therefore he exists with certainty. The true idea that God exists, leads him to infer that God would not deceive him with regard to the truth of his clear and distinct ideas. This forms the basis for him forming first principles from which true ideas of all natural things can be deduced.

this any of its properties' (TdIE§95). To illustrate this requirement he uses the example of a geometrical figure, a circle. He writes (my addition) that 'if this (a circle) is defined as a figure in which the lines drawn from the centre to the circumference are equal, it is obvious that such a definition by no means explains the essence of a circle, but only one of its properties'. If however, he says a few lines later, a circle is defined 'as a figure described by any line of which one end is fixed and the other movable. This definition clearly includes the proximate cause' (ibid.§96).[124] Recall in this regard the example, discussed earlier, of a sphere constructed by use of a rotating semi circle. The conception of a rotating semi circle can also be regarded as an adequate definition of a circle, seeing that it includes its proximate or efficient cause. Now, as we have become accustomed to, we here again find the notions of cause and adequate knowledge working close together in Spinoza. With regard to the use of definitions in Spinoza, there is a close relation between a good definition and the notion of cause. Something whose nature involves existence, i.e. is the cause of itself, is defined through its own essence, whereas something whose nature is distinguished from its existence, i.e. is not the cause of itself, must be defined through its proximate cause. This method is the same as that found when Spinoza considers the best kind of knowledge, which is to know something through its essence alone or through its proximate cause (ibid.§19).

Therefore, when Spinoza moves on to set out the requirements for a good definition of *created* things, the first condition he stipulates is that a good definition must include the proximate cause of the created thing.[125] In the case of the circle it involves a line and the rotation of this line around a fixed point. In the case of the sphere it included the semi circle and the rotation of this. Spinoza's method of defining created things adequately requires, that the nature of the efficient cause of such things must be included in the definition. The method applied is that the definition or essence of the created thing will be inferred from the definition or essence of its proximate cause. In terms of Spinoza's rationalist method this requirement makes complete sense. Created things are defined as modes that are in something else and conceived through something else (1def5). An adequate definition

[124] Hobbes uses these same requirements and also the same example of a circle in his discussion of definitions (De Dijn 1996: 156). See also footnote 216 to *letter 60*, where Morgan says: 'From an axiomatic perspective, this claim amounts to the requirement that all definitions be constructive. Spinoza's understanding of geometrical construction follows closely that of Thomas Hobbes.' (S: 913).
[125] I have argued earlier that I understand proximate cause here to refer to God, the efficient cause of the essences and existence of all things (1p25).

of created things must therefore involve the idea of God's essence, which is the first and sole cause of all things (1p25). If this is done correctly, the properties of the created thing can be inferred or deduced from its conception, which is Spinoza's second condition for such definitions. In the case of the correct definition of a circle '…we can clearly deduce that all the lines drawn from the centre to the circumference are equal' (TdIE§96).

Spinoza's requirement for a good definition of created things seems quite straightforward regarding geometrical objects, but how should this requirement be understood in the case of particular things? What would the definition of a particular man, say Peter, look like, and how is it possible that the properties pertaining to Peter can be inferred from the definition of Peter? In my view Spinoza's *letter 34* is quite helpful in this regard. Spinoza states there that:

> 1. The true definition of each single thing includes nothing other than the simple nature of the thing defined. Hence it follows that:
> 2. No definition involves or expresses a plurality, or a fixed number of individuals, since it involves and expresses only the nature of the thing as it is in itself. (Ep34 S: 854.)[126]

The interesting point from the above citation is that, for Spinoza, a good definition can only express something's *simple nature*, which refers to the things nature or essence, *as it is in itself*. Seeing that it is only to God that a simple nature is attributed, the requirement for a good definition of created things refers us to the nature of the thing's efficient cause, which is to God's nature or essence. In 4pref, Spinoza writes that 'nothing belongs to the nature of anything except that which follows from the necessity of the nature of its efficient cause'. If we apply Spinoza's rule for the definition of a created thing, then the true definition of a particular thing must express the nature of its efficient cause, which is God's nature. A good definition of a particular thing, in Spinoza, would then perhaps be, that such things are finite modes of God's very essence, which is his power.[127] From this definition, its

[126] This matter is also addressed in 1p8sch2 and the argument presented is much the same as in Ep34.
[127] The few definitions in Spinoza, relating to particular things all seem to capture that which all such things have in common. For example, in 1def5 the dependent nature of finite modes is defined. That all particular bodies express 'God's essence insofar as he is considered as an extended thing', is defined in

properties, such as its conatus or striving nature, can be inferred. In my view then, the role of definitions in Spinoza, with regard to particular things, is not aimed at conceiving the *individual* natures of created things, for example, of a certain human being. This is not a controversial claim and follows quite clearly from Spinoza's method, which states that particular things are not in themselves and cannot be conceived through their own natures. Consequently, in my view, the individual nature of a created thing can also not be defined adequately. In my view Spinoza did not intend that definitions be used for this purpose in his system. The individual nature of a particular thing to exist in a certain manner is determined by other finite things and this nature cannot be inferred from the nature of its proximate cause to be known adequately. In accordance with *letter 34*, cited above, it is my view that only something's *simple nature*, that is, the nature of its efficient cause (God), which *all* particular things express, that can be defined adequately.[128] As argued throughout it is only the common essence of things, i.e. their simple or inmost nature that can be adequately known and defined. This matter is a very good illustration of how the notions of essence and method work together to produce good definitions and adequate knowledge of all things. Spinoza completes his rules for a definition of created things with the third condition, which is that a good definition of a created thing must also be affirmative.

In the case of *uncreated* things the requirements for a good definition are:

> 1. That it should exclude every cause; that is, that the thing should need nothing else for its explanation besides its own being.
> 2. That, given the definition of the thing, there should remain no room for the question: Does it exist?

2def1. In 2def7 the determined existence of all particular things is defined and in the Definitions of Emotions the very essence of man is defined as desire (S: 311).

[128] As discussed earlier, it is not my intention to suggest that particular things do not have individual natures and that we cannot have any adequate knowledge at all about them. For Spinoza much can be adequately known about individual things. We can know with certainty *that* they are contained in God, follow from God and are continuously dependent on him and that they do express God's essence. We can also certainly know *that* all finite bodies do have individual natures, i.e. ratios of motion and rest. As argued previously, because we cannot fully comprehend how the individual nature of a body is actually produced, our idea of it will always be partial or inadequate. Our finite minds cannot contain an adequate idea of the whole causal nexus involved in producing particular bodies. I argue in the following chapter that Spinoza's intuitive knowledge of the third kind is mainly tasked with knowing particular things adequately.

> 3. That, as far as the mind is concerned, it should contain no substantives that can be put in adjectival form; that is, it should not be explicated through any abstractions.
> 4. And finally (although it is not really necessary to make this observation), it is required that all its properties can be deduced from its definition. (TdIE§97.)

Spinoza seems then to have made good progress and has produced the rules or conditions that true definitions must comply with. He seems then to have devised a way to produce the foundational definition of the most perfect Being or God, which will anchor his philosophy and supply the indubitable starting point from which true and certain ideas of the essences of all things can be deduced. In the TdIE this point was never reached, as the treatise remained unfinished. The foundational definitions of his system are however present in his other works and the most mature example is found in the *Ethic*s:

> By God I mean an absolutely infinite being, that is, substance consisting of infinite attributes, each of which expresses eternal and infinite essence. (1def6.)

We should now be in a position to put the different elements of Spinoza's rationalist method together. His method utilizes, firstly, simple or given true ideas that are combined with certain universal axiomatic truths to form foundational definitions which function as the absolute starting points for his system. These definitions are seen to contain certain knowledge of God's essence as expressed in his attributes and the immediate infinite modes. From this indubitable inception it can be deduced with certainty that all particular things are modes of God's essence and that their very essence is contained in God's nature. In this way the essence, order and unity of the whole of nature can be known adequately (TdIE§99). In the section (§99-103) of the treatise Spinoza gives an overview of the method he has developed in the preceding sections. It is worthwhile considering this section in some detail as it gives quite a good idea of how Spinoza sees the different elements of his method working and

fitting together.[129]As seen, Spinoza's method starts with the indubitable knowledge of God's essence, which is the cause of all things and which essence represented in thought, is also the cause of all our ideas. Spinoza adds to this (my emphasis):

> …that it is above all necessary for us to deduce our ideas from physical things, i.e. from *real beings*, advancing as far as we can, in accordance with the chain of causes *from one real being to another real being*, and in such a manner as to never get involved with abstractions and universals, neither inferring something real from them nor inferring them from something real. For in either case the true progress of the intellect is interrupted.

As argued earlier, Spinoza mostly uses the term *real* when referring to God's essence as expressed in his attributes (STapp1p4dem; 1p15sch; 1p29sch; Ep83). In this section under consideration, Spinoza actually confirms this and says that by *real beings*[130] he does not have mutable particular things in mind, but the *fixed and eternal things*, which refers to God's essence as expressed in his attributes and immediate infinite modes. The first element in his method is the discovery of the true ideas of God's essence, which are, the most universal features that are common to the whole of nature, that is, its fixed and eternal order and the laws through which Nature or God constantly and consistently acts. The intellect has these ideas innately and knows them to be certainly true. The second step is to deduce the essences of all other things from the true ideas of the essence of the most perfect Being or God. Spinoza makes it quite clear that the natures of particular things cannot be known empirically, that is, 'from their series or order of existing, which would furnish us with nothing but their extrinsic characteristics, their relations, or, at the most, their circumstances' (TdIE§101). For Spinoza knowledge of the latter is 'far from the inmost essence of things'. In the following sentence he then says quite clearly that this inmost essence of

[129] This can be compared to the section in the TTP7 (S: 460) in which Spinoza also gives an outline of his method. They are quite similar, in my view.

[130] There is a close correlation in Spinoza's rationalism between *real* existence and truth. In early rationalism a completely true idea is regarded to be of something real, that exists in the highest degree. The highest form of reality is attributed to God, whose essence is *causa sui*, that is, something whose existence pertains to its essence. God's essence cannot be distinguished or separated from his existence. Modes are not self-conceived and have, therefore, a lesser essence and existence and therefore reality. It is only in modes that essence and existence are distinguished from one another. To say that finite things have a lesser level of reality is not to say they are illusionary. In Spinoza, all things are conceived to express *reality* in proportion to their nature. See Della Rocca (2008: 254-274) for an interesting discussion of this subject.

things ‘is to be sought only from the fixed and eternal things.’ He then adds that particular things depend intimately and essentially on the fixed and eternal things and ‘can neither be nor be conceived without them.’ The essences of particular things are to be deduced from the adequate knowledge of the essences of the fixed and eternal things, that is, from their efficient cause, which is God. All things involve and express the eternal and infinite essence of God in proportion to their own nature. This knowledge, that God’s very essence is expressed in all things, according to their nature, is for Spinoza true knowledge of the eternal essences of things and this completes the task he set out to achieve. As he says, then ‘our mind…will reproduce Nature as closely as possible; for it will possess in the form of thought the essence, order and unity of Nature’ (TdIE§99).

With regard to certain knowledge of the durational existence of particular things, Spinoza adds that this ‘appears to be no small difficulty’ and seemingly beyond the powers of the human intellect (ibid.§102). To attain true knowledge of the durational existence of particular things, that is, over and above certitude of their essence, ‘we must resort to other aids apart from those employed in understanding the eternal things and their laws.’ Spinoza ends this section by saying that this project of acquiring adequate knowledge of particular things, albeit important, falls beyond the scope of his own enquiry, which is to acquire certainty with regard to ‘the eternal things and their infallible laws’ (ibid.). It seems that Spinoza thought that knowledge of the particular natures of things depended on empirical experimental research. His priority is clearly adequate knowledge of the eternal and fixed essence of things (De Dijn 1996: 178).

4.4. The properties of the intellect

Spinoza's final step in his unfinished treatise is to *enumerate*[131] the properties of the intellect.

> 1. That it involves certainty, that is, it knows that things are in reality as they are contained in the intellect in the form of thought.

This property refers to the early rationalist theory of ideas and forms the heart of early rationalist thinking. I would only emphasize again, the close link between the intellect and *certainty* in early rationalism and in Spinoza. Since this matter has been discussed in quite some detail earlier, I will proceed to the following property.

> 2. That it perceives some things, or forms some ideas, independently, and some ideas it forms from other ideas. To wit, it forms the idea of quantity independently without attending to other thoughts, but it forms the ideas of motion only by attending to the idea of quantity.

The above refers to the notion of absolutely simple ideas. Such ideas are the most fundamental true ideas and are seen to contain other true ideas, such as the ideas of the modes, which can be deduced from them. The example is of the idea of extension, which idea is seemingly formed independently. The idea of extension or of quantity contains the idea of motion, which can be deduced from the former. The ideas of the essences of particular bodies, that they are all just a certain proportion of motion, follows from the idea of motion, I would assume.

> 3. The ideas that it forms independently express infinity, but determinate ideas are formed from other ideas. For if it perceives the idea of a quantity through a cause, then it determines that idea through the idea of a quantity, as when it perceives that a body is formed from the motion of a plane, a plane from the

[131] In the *Regulae* 'enumeration' is one of the rules for directing the intellect that Descartes sets out. See, for example Rule 7: 'We maintain, furthermore that enumeration is required for the completion of our knowledge. The other Rules do indeed help us to resolve most questions, but it is only with the aid of enumeration that we are able to make a true and certain judgment about whatever we apply our minds to' (CSM I: 25). Spinoza seems to be following these rules quite closely in the TdIE.

> motion of a line, and a line from the motion of a point. These perceptions do not serve for the understanding of quantity, but only to determine it. This is evident from the fact that we conceive these quantities as formed, as it were, from motion, whereas motion is not perceived unless quantity is perceived; and again we can prolong the motion to form a line of infinite extent, which we could not do if we did not possess the idea of infinite quantity.

I understand this property in much the same way as the previous one. The idea of extension is perceived as causa sui, whereas motion is perceived as caused or determined by the idea of extension. The idea of motion determines the idea of extension and does not add anything to its conception.

> 4. It forms positive ideas before negative ones.

As discussed earlier it was Descartes who introduced the quite revolutionary idea that the human intellect could have some affirmative or positive knowledge of God's essence. Any knowledge of the nature of God was previously described in negative terms only. Spinoza refers to this earlier in the treatise:

> This is evident from the fact that men have often devised negative terms for all those things that are only in the intellect and not in the imagination (e.g. incorporeal, infinite, etc.), and they also express negatively many things that are really affirmative, and conversely (e.g., uncreated, independent, infinite, immortal, etc. (TdIE§89.)

I understand this property to refer to the early rationalist positive understanding of the nature and power of the intellect. For them, the intellect had a true and positive cognitive grasp of the essence of things.

> 5. It perceives things not so much under duration as under some form of eternity, and as being of infinite number. Or rather, in its perception of things, it attends neither to number nor duration. But when it imagines things, it perceives them as being of fixed number, with determinate duration and quantity.

This property of the intellect has already been discussed in some detail. The expression 'under some form of eternity' is used by Spinoza when referring to the conceptions of the intellect, that is reason or intuition.[132] For example, when conceiving particular bodies in this manner the intellect conceives their efflux from eternity. All particular things are understood to be contained in God, to follow from God and to involve and express his essence.

> 6. The clear and distinct ideas that we form seem to follow solely from the necessity of our nature in such a way as to seem to depend absolutely on our power alone. But with confused ideas the contrary is the case; they are often formed without our consent.

This property has also been discussed in detail earlier.

> 7. There are many ways in which the mind can determine the ideas that the intellect forms from other ideas. …There are innumerable other ways.

Spinoza here refers to the active ability of the intellect to adequately form new ideas in many different ways, such as in the example of the rotating semi circle (TdIE§72).

> 8. Ideas are the more perfect as they express a greater degree of perfection of an object. For we do not admire the architect who has designed a chapel as much as one who has designed a splendid temple.

The intellect is able to produce a vast array of adequate ideas. As we have seen, the intellect produces the true definition of the most perfect Being or God, which is its greatest and most perfect achievement, for Spinoza.

Then, as the editors of the treatise say: 'The rest is lacking' (S: 30).[133]

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[132] See also the use of this expression in 2p44cor2 and 5p22. This matter will be dealt with in more detail in chapter six.

[133] Some scholars are of the opinion that Spinoza runs into difficulties in the final passages of the treatise and therefore abandons it. I do not intend adding to this speculation. For a brief discussion of this see De Dijn (1996: 183).

5. Knowledge and Essence

I argue that Spinoza's project of emending the intellect is related to the supposed early modern philosophical quest for certitude. The response of some early rationalist philosophers, such as Descartes and Spinoza, to this challenge came in the form of an innovation in their epistemology that is aimed at adequately conceiving the inmost essence of things. I claim that Spinoza's TdIE is aimed at devising the best way or method of undertaking this task, which includes the search for the kind of knowledge best suited for this purpose. In Spinoza, the idea of emending or perfecting the intellect has then clearly much to do with his theory of knowledge, which is the subject of this chapter. The explication of the close association between the notions of essence and certainty in his theory of knowledge will be an important area of focus. I contend that the best kind of knowledge in Spinoza, i.e. intuition or knowledge of the third kind also represents the attainment of the highest level of *certainty* in human knowledge.

In Spinoza's TdIE, the task of discovering the kind of knowledge best suited for the purpose of attaining certitude, starts with the *historiola mentis* or the survey of knowledge types. Early on in this treatise Spinoza writes:

> To this end our natural order of exposition requires that I should here recapitulate all the modes of perceiving which I have hitherto employed in confidently affirming or denying something, so that I may select the best of all, and at the same time begin to know my powers and the nature which I desire to perfect. (TdIE§18.)[134]

[134] In Ep37 Spinoza also refers to this survey of knowledge types and describes it as 'a brief account of the mind or its perceptions in the manner expounded by Verulam'. This method of *historiola mentis* seems to have been propagated by Francis Bacon and was quite widely known and used in philosophical circles in early modern times.

5.1. *Historiola mentis*

5.1.1. Hearsay

Spinoza describes this first knowledge type as follows:

> There is the perception we have from hearsay or from some sign conventionally agreed upon. (TdIE§19.)

Examples that Spinoza gives of this knowledge type, is to know such things as the date of one's birth and who one's parents are, received from some kind of report. Such information is passively received from various sources, through hearsay, general opinion, gossip, and is found by most people to be quite trustworthy and is seldom doubted. For Spinoza, however, this type of knowledge is uncertain and does not perceive the essence of things, which is what his method aims to do. For Spinoza, from hearsay 'we perceive nothing of the essence of the thing … and since a thing's individual existence is not known unless its essence is known … we can clearly infer from this that any degree of *certainty* that we have from hearsay must be excluded from the sciences' (ibid.§26 emphasis added). It is notable that the pursuit of certainty is apparent in Spinoza's theory of knowledge from the very beginning. The exposing of knowledge that is based on hearsay, opinion and custom as uncertain is an important task of the EIP. As discussed, for Spinoza, the *illness* of the mind can partly be attributed to it being infested by inadequate ideas based on hearsay, opinion and the like. The individual wanting to make progress in Spinoza's EIP needs to recognize the unsure nature of knowledge based on such perceptions and reject it as unsuitable for the purpose of attaining certainty. Spinoza thought that most people are quite happy to live by general hearsay and opinion and that it is extremely difficult to reduce one's dependency on this type of knowledge. To do so demands some self – initiative, determination and courage. The importance of this point should not be underestimated with regard to the successful undertaking of Spinoza's EIP.

5.1.2. Casual experience

The second type of knowledge that Spinoza evaluates in terms of producing certitude is casual experience:

> There is the perception we have from casual experience; that is, experience that is not determined by the intellect, but is so called because it chances thus to occur, and we have experienced nothing else that contradicts it, so that it remains in our minds unchallenged. (Ibid.§19.)

Hereafter Spinoza gives some examples of this kind of knowledge:

> By casual experience I know that I shall die; this I affirm because I have seen that others like me have died, although they have not all lived to the same age nor have they died from the same disease. Again, by casual experience I know that oil has the property of feeding fire, and water of extinguishing it. I know too that a dog is a barking animal and man a rational animal. And it is in this way that I know almost everything that is of practical use in life. (Ibid.§20.)

Spinoza then draws the following conclusion:

> As to this second mode, again it cannot be said to contain the idea of the proportion[135]which it seeks. Besides its considerable uncertainty and indefiniteness, no one will in this way perceive anything in natural things except their accidents, which are never clearly understood unless their essences are first known. Hence this mode too must be excluded. (Ibid.§27.)

In a footnote commenting on this type of knowledge, Spinoza likens it to 'the method of proceeding of Empiricists' (ibid.). As argued earlier Spinoza rejects the empiricist approach as unsuitable for attaining truth and certainty. In his view, certainty or *scientia* can only be found in an a priori type of knowledge of the essence of things.

[135] It is notable in this early stage of Spinoza's consideration of knowledge types that the notion of *proportion* is already linked to the best type of knowledge. This somewhat difficult element of Spinoza's theory of knowledge will be discussed later in this chapter.

For the likes of Descartes and Spinoza, empirical observation and experimentation could only deliver *accidental* knowledge, which, cannot be clearly understood 'unless their essences are first known' (ibid.). The term *accident* used here seemingly refers to the Aristotelian notion of a certain property that is seen to be non-essential to the nature of the thing.[136] I think it important to note that Spinoza does not have an *all-or-nothing* approach when surveying the different kinds of knowledge. Although he does deem the first two knowledge types to deliver only uncertain ideas, that are unsuitable for his purpose, these kinds of knowledge are not regarded as completely worthless. He says in this regard, that it is mainly through such casual experience that we know 'almost everything that is of practical use in life' (ibid.§20). However, for Spinoza's purpose of emending the intellect, the first two knowledge types are clearly inadequate. Perceptions of the second type do not fit Spinoza's rationalist bill for certain knowledge. The most important reason for this inadequacy is that they do not produce knowledge of the *essence* of things.

5.1.3. Inadequate inference

Spinoza then moves to a third type of knowledge, which he describes as follows:

> There is the perception we have when the essence of a thing is inferred from another thing, but not adequately. This happens either when we infer a cause from some effect or when an inference is made from some universal which is always accompanied by some property. (TdIE§19.)

This type of knowledge differs quite a bit from the previous and does aim at knowing the essence of things, but goes about this in the wrong way and consequently falls short. In this case, the essence of something is inadequately inferred from something else. Although Spinoza regards this mode of perception to be more reliable than the first two types, it is still not adequate for the purpose of truth and certainty. As discussed earlier, the method of knowing something on the basis of another is a key element in early modern rationalism and in this regard some progress is seemingly made and a higher ranking is assigned to this third type of knowledge. As said, the

[136] For a more detailed discussion of this kind of knowledge see De Dijn (1996: 53).

problem here is that the inference is done inadequately. The correct way of conceiving the essence of a thing is to infer or deduce it from the true idea of its cause. The correct method is to proceed from cause to effect and not from an effect to its cause. Spinoza gives some interesting examples of this inadequate method of perceiving the essence of a thing:

> We deduce one thing from another as follows. When we clearly perceive that we sense such-and-such a body and no other, then from this, I say, we clearly infer that the soul is united to the body, a union which is the cause of such-and-such a sensation. But from this we cannot positively understand what is that sensation and union. (Ibid.§21.)

Spinoza's example of inadequate inference here is that the ideas we have of the affections of a certain body can be used to infer the mind-body union, but from this sensation alone the nature or cause of this union cannot be known with any certainty. Spinoza's rationalist procedure is that something can only be clearly and distinctly known, either through its essence alone, or through something else that is understood clearly and distinctly:

> For whatever we understand clearly and distinctly, we understand either through itself or through something else which is conceived through itself. (5p28dem.)

In this third type of perceiving the attempt is to proceed from an unclear idea of an effect to knowledge of the cause. This is contrary to Spinoza's method and this kind of knowledge is consequently also deemed unsuitable for the EIP and rejected. In three footnotes (S: 7) to this first example Spinoza gives some more interesting detail as to why he rejects this type of knowledge. Firstly, in footnote *f* he says:

> In such a case, we understand nothing about the cause except what we consider in the effect. This is sufficiently evident from the fact that the cause is then explained only in very general terms: e.g., 'Therefore there is something; therefore there is some power,' etc. Or again from the fact that the cause is expressed negatively: 'Therefore there is not this, or that, etc. In the second case

> something clearly conceived is ascribed to the cause by reason of the effect, as we shall show by an example. But it is only the properties, not the particular essence of the thing.

In footnote *g*, which refers to the body-soul example discussed above, he says:

> For by this union we understand nothing beyond the sensation itself; that is, the effect from which we inferred a cause of which we know nothing.

In this third mode of perceiving we are aware of the effects or properties of things, which we then deem to be caused by *something*. However, we have actually learnt very little or nothing about the cause itself. This method of inadequate inference produces only obscure perceptions of causes and effects but does not render any true and certain knowledge. In the third footnote *h* Spinoza warns that this type of inferential knowledge 'is not to be relied on without great caution. When things are conceived in this abstract way and not through their true essence, they are at once confused by the imagination'. Spinoza also gives a second example of this inadequate type of inferential knowledge:

> After I have come to know the nature of vision and realize that it has the property of making us see one and the same thing as smaller at a distance than if we were to see it near at hand, we infer that the sun is bigger than it appears, and other similar instances.

The third type of knowledge seems to only provide inadequate ideas of causes and effects, acquired through partial knowledge of the properties of something. The reason for rejecting this type of knowledge is quite clear and in accordance with Spinoza's rationalist method. The nature of the cause or essence of something cannot easily be adequately inferred from its effects or properties if the latter are unclear. However, the method applied by this type of cognition, that of knowing something through its effects or properties is not to be entirely dismissed. We will later see that Spinoza does allow that, in certain situations, the knowledge of something's nature

can be adequately known through its properties, if the ideas of its properties are clear and distinct.[137]

5.1.4. Certainty and essence

For Spinoza the only way or method of discovering certitude in knowledge is through the fourth way of perceiving things:

> Finally, there is the perception we have when a thing is perceived through its essence alone, or through knowledge of its proximate cause. (TdIE§19.)

Much has already been said about this type of knowledge in previous chapters and, to avoid repetition, I will not discuss this in any more detail here. Spinoza does give some more information of this type of knowledge in this regard in two rather short passages that is worth briefly discussing:

> Finally, a thing is perceived through its essence alone when, from the fact that I know something, I know what it is to know something; or, from the fact that I know the essence of the soul, I know that it is united to the body. By the same kind of knowledge we know that two and three are five, and that if two lines are parallel to a third line, they are parallel to one another[138], and so on. (Ibid.§22.)

[137] Towards the end of the TdIE (§107) Spinoza deems it possible to discover the definition of the intellect by considering its properties that are clear and distinct. See also the TTP4: '… since the knowledge of an effect through its cause is nothing other than the knowledge of a property of that cause, the greater our knowledge of natural phenomena, the more perfect is our knowledge of Gods essence, which is the cause of all things' (S: 428).

[138] Spinoza's use of mathematical and geometrical examples is well known and is found throughout his work. De Dijn (1996: 57) takes Spinoza's words: 'But the things that I have hitherto been able to know by this kind of knowledge have been very few', to indicate that mathematical examples serve only as analogies. According to De Dijn, Spinoza's use of mathematical examples is to teach in an exemplary way what adequate thinking means, even though it is not yet thinking about reality itself. Spinoza continues to do this throughout his work. In the Ethics, for example, there are many instances where true knowledge is compared to mathematics (1p17sch; 2p8sch). In 1app we also read: 'Indeed, it is for this reason, and this reason only, that truth might have evaded mankind forever had not Mathematics, which is concerned not with ends but only with essences and properties of figures, revealed to men a different standard of truth.'

Spinoza's remark in the above citation that 'from the fact that I know the essence of the soul, I know that it is united to the body' is a good example of what he has in mind with regard to this fourth kind of cognition. I argued earlier that Spinoza conceives the essence of thought as the affirmation of the object of which it is the idea. From the true idea of the essence of thought, i.e. affirmation, we can know the nature of the mind, that it is united with its body or that it affirms its body. Any actual mind will necessarily strive to affirm the existence of its body and to preserve its body as far as it can (3p10dem). This idea of the essence of the mind cannot be discovered by sense experience, but can only be known through the true idea of God's essence. Such knowledge, that is attained either through a direct intuition of its essence or by means of adequate inference, is deemed to be certain. Spinoza also compares the fourth kind of knowledge to a mathematical knowledge:

> By the same kind of knowledge we know that two and three are five, and that if two lines are parallel to a third line, they are parallel to one another, and so on. (TdIE§22.)

This fourth type of perception is regarded as the best type of knowledge for the reason that it delivers certain knowledge. It is only of the essence of things that we can have complete certainty, according to Spinoza. In closing, it is quite interesting to note some different formulations of this basic rationalist method that are found throughout Spinoza's writings:

> The perception we have when a thing is perceived through its essence alone, or through knowledge of its proximate cause. (TdIE§19.)

> For by substance they would understand that which is in itself and is conceived through itself; that is, that the knowledge of which does not require the knowledge of any other thing. By modifications they would understand that which is in another thing, and whose conception is formed from the thing in which they are. (1p8sch2.)

> Now since all things are in God and conceived through God, it follows that from this knowledge we can deduce a great many things so as to know them adequately. (2p47sch.)

> For whatever we clearly and distinctly understand must become known to us either through itself or through some other thing that is clearly and distinctly understood through itself. (TTP6 S: 447.)

The important outcome of this survey of knowledge types is that, for Spinoza, certitude is closely associated with the knowledge of the essence of things. We have then established that the best method of emending the intellect and achieving certitude is to perceive things solely through their essence or through the essence of their proximate or efficient cause. This method of perceiving things delivers true and certain knowledge of the essence of our world.

In the following section I will consider the further development of Spinoza's theory of knowledge in his other writings and the attention will mainly fall on his *Short Treatise*, the *Ethics* and to an extent also on the *Theological-Political Treatise.* In his unfinished TdIE, Spinoza undertakes the *historiola mentis*, which is only a *survey* of knowledge types and does not represent his own fully developed theory of knowledge. In my view one of the most important later developments in his theory of knowledge has to do with the distinction he makes between the two actions of the intellect, that of reason and intuition. These two elements in Spinoza's theory of adequate knowledge both play important roles in his method of emending the intellect and my main task in what follows is to clarify the role that our adequate ideas play in the project of emending the intellect. An important aim here will be to clarify how our ideas guide us towards our highest good and unite us with it. I argue that, although reason and intuition both employ adequate ideas, there seems to be an important difference between them and this has much to do with finding the highest form of certainty. Whereas the former proceeds by means of sound reasoning and the forming of clear concepts or definitions, the latter is based on an inner sense of certainty that arises from our innate ideas, which is akin to feeling. I will firstly outline Spinoza's theory of inadequate knowledge as found in his other writings and thereafter consider his theory of adequate knowledge in more detail.

5.2. Inadequate knowledge

In the following paragraph I give a brief overview of Spinoza's theory of inadequate knowledge as found in the TdIE, the *Short Treatise* and the *Ethics*. I argue that this theory is basically unchanged in these works. The most important aspect of Spinoza's view of this type of knowledge is that the mind is understood to be largely inactive, passive or receptive. This type of knowledge is based on our sensory ideas, related to the body and its affections. Spinoza consistently refers to this knowledge type as the 'imagination'[139]. This view of the first kind of knowledge in the TdIE is evident:

> Or if you wish, you may here understand by imagination whatever you please as long as it is something different from the intellect, and the soul has a passive relation to it. It matters not how you understand it, now that we know that it is something random, and that the soul is passive to it, while we also know how we may be delivered from it with the aid of the intellect. (TdIE§84.)

> Thus we have distinguished between the true idea and other perceptions, and we have established that the fictitious, the false, and other ideas have their origin in the imagination, that is, in certain sensations that are (so to speak) fortuitous and unconnected, arising not from the power of the mind but from external causes, in accordance as the body, dreaming or waking, receives various motions. (Ibid.)

In spite of what he says in the above, Spinoza does not have a completely negative attitude towards the body and does not consider the body to be the cause of inadequate knowledge (ST2/19 S: 90).[140] Inadequate knowledge, in Spinoza's view, stems from obscure and partial ideas in the mind that arise from the body's affections. The presence of such ideas in the mind is quite natural and follows from the body being inevitably part of the natural world (4p4). A finite human mind is not able to fully comprehend the infinite chain of finite causes that precede the affections of bodies and the ideas arising from them. As argued, the reason for this seems to be that

[139] See for example TdIE§84; 1p15sch; 2p40sch2; Ep12.
[140] In this Spinoza differs from Descartes, who does regard the body to be a powerful source of the passions.

bodies are embedded in and form part of a larger body of motion and rest and sensory ideas can, consequently, only be clearly conceived if the body's relation to the whole of nature is understood. As said, this is deemed by Spinoza to be beyond the reach of a finite mind and the reason why Spinoza deems this kind of knowledge to be made up of ideas that are partial, mutilated or fragmentary (TdIE§73; 2p29cor; 2p40sch2). Sensory perceptions are however not completely worthless and much useful information can be acquired from them. Sensory ideas and common sense knowledge based on them is however unsuitable for the rationalist project of attaining truth and certainty. As suggested previously, Spinoza does not have a negative idea of the body and thinks that the affections of the body by external forces is, in fact, necessary to get the activity of reflective thinking in the mind underway (Koistinen 2009b: 187).

Moving on to the *Short Treatise on God, Man and His Well-Being* we do find a more comprehensive theory of knowledge. In this work we already find Spinoza's well-known distinction between three types of knowledge, which are here named *opinion, true belief* and *clear knowledge* (ST2/1,2 S: 62,3). First level knowledge or opinion is also understood in the *Short Treatise* to be based on hearsay and experience and 'commonly subject to error.' For Spinoza, this type of knowledge, furthermore, has 'no place when we are sure of anything'. It is notable that Spinoza also emphasizes here that the passions have their origin in inadequate knowledge and that the body is not the principle cause of the passions. It seems that Spinoza here also employs the idea that knowledge based on sense perception gives rise to nothing more than opinion and that it does not produce adequate ideas. In the *Short Treatise* we find the same theory with regard to inadequate knowledge as in the TdIE.

In the *Ethics*, Spinoza continues with his theory of three types of knowledge and continues to employ the notion of the first kind of knowledge, which he also refers to as *opinion* and the *imagination* (2p40sch2). Spinoza also clearly associates sense perception with this first grade of knowledge and confirms the sentiments found in his earlier works with regard to its inadequacy. For Spinoza, inadequate knowledge arises from 'individual objects presented to us through the senses in a fragmentary (*mutilate*) and confused manner without any intellectual order (2p29cor); and therefore I call such perceptions "knowledge from casual experience"'(2p40sch2). This is the lowest level of knowledge and, unfortunately, the level that most people are comfortable with. There is also a certain kind of lifestyle that relates to this level of knowledge - a life of the senses - which is fixated on striving for transient things

and sensual pleasure related to bodily existence. Spinoza describes human beings who live by this kind of knowledge as 'carnal man' (TTP4 S: 428). For Spinoza this kind of life can only, eventually, be deeply unsatisfying. This is because such a life is mostly determined externally and breeds passivity and follows the common order of nature. People living such lives are deemed by Spinoza to be slaves of their passions and to lead a life of bondage. This *dream*-like world of the first level of knowledge is however extremely powerful and can eventually be very damaging.[141] This world of carnal man is also very difficult to change, according to Spinoza (TdIE§1-10). Spinoza's EIP is, in my view, aimed at helping us escape from the bondage of the imagination by discovering the power of our own intellect and employing its intellectual tools to develop our minds and lives in accordance with the dictates of reason.

5.3. Adequate knowledge

In the following section I attend to Spinoza's theory of adequate knowledge and focus mainly on the two actions of the intellect, namely reason and intuition. Spinoza does not present a complete theory of knowledge in his unfinished TdIE and I argue that it is specifically his conception of adequate knowledge that evolved further in his later writings.[142]I contend that the supposed development in Spinoza's theory of adequate knowledge is that he conceives two actions of the intellect, namely reason and intuition, which have each their own role to play but also work together to reach the highest level of certainty in human knowledge. In my view Spinoza's mature theory of knowledge incorporates a Platonist notion of *progression* in the levels of adequate

[141] Spinoza writes in this regard, that under the sway of the imagination 'there is no end to the kinds of omens that they imagine, and they read extraordinary things into nature as if the whole of Nature were a partner in their madness' (TTPpref S: 388). He also refers to reason as 'the light of the mind, without which the mind sees nothing but dreams and fantasies' (TTP15 S: 523), which is a reference to the first kind of knowledge or the imagination that is based on hearsay, opinion and casual experience. In the TP1, Spinoza writes that most people conceive things 'not as they are, but as they would like them to be…and their theories 'border on fantasy' and are only relevant 'in Utopia' (S: 680).

[142] In the TdIE Spinoza uses the term *intellect* when referring to adequate knowledge and he does also use the term *reason* (TdIE§99) but does not refer to *intuition.* In the *Ethics* he uses the terms *intellect*, *reason* and *intuition* interchangeably, which does give rise to some interpretation difficulties. For example in 4app4 Spinoza writes 'intellect or reason' and refers to them both as leading to the highest happiness or blessedness, which are terms he mostly reserves for intuition. In the TTP and TP Spinoza mostly uses the term *reason* or the *natural light of reason* and it is quite notable that the term *intuition* is not used in these later writings.

knowledge.[143]Reason, or knowledge of the second kind, is the first grade of adequate knowledge, which precedes intuition and lays the foundation or prepares the way for a higher form of certainty. Intuition, the second grade of adequate knowledge, follows from reason and is seen by Spinoza to represent the highest degree of certainty in human knowledge. I claim that intuitive knowledge is also the end goal of the EIP and represents the very pinnacle of human intellectual perfection. For Spinoza, this third kind of knowledge is our summum bonum and the only incorruptible source of joy and self-contentment.

In the *Short Treatise* Spinoza already distinguishes between two actions of adequate knowledge, although he does use somewhat different terminology in this regard. In this treatise, human nature is conceived to consist of different modes of ideas, which are 'differentiated as Opinion, true Belief, and clear and distinct Knowledge, produced by objects, each in its own way' (ST2/1 S: 62).[144] The three different types of ideas mentioned above are produced in the following way, '… either merely through belief (which belief arises either from experience, or from hearsay, … or, in the second place, we acquire them by way of true belief[145], … or, thirdly, we have them as a result of clear and distinct conception' (ibid.). Spinoza says, furthermore, that these different types of ideas represent 'different grades' of knowledge (ST2/2 S: 63). Importantly, he then continues and says that 'the first is commonly subject to error. *The second and third, however, although they differ from one another, cannot err'* (ibid., my emphasis). In the *Short Treatise* then, *both* the second and third kinds of knowledge are seen to be adequate. Spinoza continues to hold this view in the *Ethics*:

> Knowledge of the first kind is the only cause of falsity; knowledge of the second and third kind is necessarily true. (2p41.)

[143] In Spinoza's system of knowledge there cannot be a progression from inadequate to adequate ideas, that is, from the first level of imagination to the adequate second and third levels. For Spinoza a true idea is either conceived through itself or it is inferred from another true idea. For Spinoza, a true idea cannot follow or progress from an inadequate idea (2p41; 5p28dem).

[144] The notion that man's essence consists of *modes of thinking* is also found in 2p11dem: 'The essence of man is constituted by definite modes of the attributes of God, to wit, modes of thinking.' See also 2ax2: 'Man thinks'. It is important to note, with regard to the EIP project, that knowledge based on inadequate ideas (opinion, experience) is included in this conception of human essence. Although Spinoza states that 'man thinks' this does not mean that all humans naturally use reason adequately. For Spinoza, adequate thinking must be actively developed and this makes room for his EIP.

[145] In the *Short Treatise* Spinoza associates *True Belief* with *Reason* (ST2/4 note 11 S: 66).

I argue then that in the *Short Treatise* and the *Ethics* Spinoza conceives two actions of the intellect and sees them to both produce and work with adequate ideas. How should the difference between the true ideas of reason and those of intuition be understood? I believe that his distinction between two levels of adequate knowledge commits Spinoza to two different kinds of adequate ideas and that this difference has much to do with the respective level of certainty attained. Although the ideas of reason are true, intuition seems to surpass reason by attaining the highest possible form of certainty in knowledge, which is an *inner* conviction.

5.3.1. The dictates of reason

The first distinction that Spinoza makes between reason and intuition is that the former is seen to precede the latter in some way:

> The conatus or desire, to know things by the third kind of knowledge cannot arise from the first kind of knowledge, but from the second. (5p28.)

To make sense of this contrast, I suggest that this matter be associated with Spinoza's project of emending the intellect, which he sees as a process that must follow a certain order or procedure. It seems that in the EIP we must first learn to use reason aright before progressing to the higher level of intuitive knowledge. The important notion of *medicina mentis*, discussed earlier, should also be kept in mind here. Most early modern thinkers regarded the human mind as somewhat incapacitated by inadequate ideas, which rendered it *ill* and unable to apply reason correctly. That said, they did not however think that the natural light of reason was completely extinguished, as did most reformist theologians. In the *Regulae* and the TdIE we find certain prescriptions or methods, rules and procedures, which are all meant to assist the mind in regaining its natural ability to reason in a sound way. I argue, that it is reason that takes the initial role in the process of emending the intellect. As mentioned above, our given true ideas, being simple in nature, are not extinguishable and this makes it possible for reason to initiate the process of emending of the intellect.

The important task of reason in the EIP is to expose the contingent nature of the many transient things, to which we attach ourselves when we follow our imaginary

ideas and to also redirect us toward those things that are good and in our best interest. For Spinoza there is a close association between reason and virtue (4p24). In the EIP we can confidently follow reason and know that by doing so we are furthering our own interest in the best possible way. It is reason that produces the ideas of virtues such as strength of mind, courage, nobility, self control, sobriety, courtesy, mercy and the notion of the common good, that function as its dictates to guide and discipline us in our struggle against the passions (3p59sch; 5p10sch). It is reason that assists us in understanding our passive emotions so that we can become more independent of their detrimental influence. For Spinoza, the purification of the mind is a long and difficult process and its highest level is not easily attainable (5p42sch). The first stage in this undertaking then, is for us to become responsive to the admonitions of reason. Developing our ability to use reason correctly is the first crucial stage in this process of emending the intellect.

One of the ways in which reason directs us towards objects that are best for us is by producing a system of indubitable knowledge, an example of which is Spinoza's philosophical masterpiece, the *Ethics*. The latter is clearly intended to make a much-needed contribution toward the intellectual development of mankind and to assist the establishing of a rational society (TdIE§17). Although there are, without doubt, many intuitive elements in the *Ethics*, it is in my view, mainly the product of *reason* (5p36sch). Its foundational definitions and axioms are produced by reason and it is reason that deduces all the propositions and demonstrations, etc. that follow from the absolute starting points. The whole work is a product of sound philosophical reasoning, done in accordance with a certain geometrical order and procedure in which rules are laid down and followed.[146] In the following citation Spinoza refers to the important and demanding work of reason:

> Now the process of deduction solely from intellectual axioms usually demands the apprehension of a long series of connected propositions, as well as the greatest caution, acuteness of intelligence, and restraint, all of which qualities are rarely to be found among men. So men prefer to be taught by experience

[146] Reason establishes an intellectual order in the mind, which is lacking in knowledge based on imagination. An important aspect of the early modern notion of the *illness* of the mind is that it has become accustomed to follow the common order of nature, which is to live in accordance with the random order of sensory ideas (2p18sch), which is also the primary cause of the passions.

> rather than engage in the logical process of deduction from a few axioms. (TTP5 S: 441.)

In a passage from the *Short Treatise*, Spinoza refers the task allotted to reason (which he refers to as *true belief*) and also indicates how he sees it to differ from clear knowledge or, to what he later terms, *intuition*:

> Belief is a strong proof based on Reasons, whereby I am convinced in my mind that the thing is really, and just such, outside my understanding, as I am convinced in my mind that it is. I say, *a strong proof based on Reasons*, in order to distinguish it from both Opinion, which is always doubtful and liable to error, and from Knowledge which does not consist in being convinced by Reasons, but in an immediate union with the thing itself. I say, *that the thing is really and just such outside my understanding – really*, because reasons cannot deceive me in this, for otherwise they would not be different from opinion. *Just such*, for it can tell me what the thing ought to be, and not what it really is, otherwise it would not be different from Knowing. *Outside*, for it makes us enjoy intellectually not what is in us, but what is outside us. (ST2/4 note 11 S: 66.)

A little further on in ST2/26 Spinoza describes reason metaphorically as a *stairway* that makes it possible for us to reach our highest intellectual destination:

> Lastly, we see also that reasoning is not the principal thing in us, but only like a staircase by which we climb up to the desired place, or like a good genius which, without any falsity or deception, brings us tidings of the highest good in order thereby to stimulate us to pursue it, and to become united with it; which union is our supreme happiness and bliss. (S: 100.)

A basic difference then between reason and intuition seems to be that the former convinces us of our highest good by means of *strong proofs based on reasons*, whereas intuition produces conviction by uniting us with *truth* itself, i.e. with our summum bonum or the idea of God. Another point of contrast is that reason teaches us what our true good *ought* to be, but is unable to determine *what it really* is. Lastly, although a feeling of pleasure does arise from living in accordance with reason I

argue that this has not yet been fully internalized, whereas intuition brings about a stronger inner feeling of conviction, self-contentment and intellectual joy. This is all rather difficult to understand and explain, but one thing that is clear, is that reason or knowledge of the second kind, is not the end goal in the EIP. I argue that reason's task is to awaken the mind to its true ideas and to restore its ability to make use of these innate tools, which then leads to the later full enjoyment of the highest form of certainty in knowledge. As mentioned earlier, it seems that for Spinoza, the highest certainty in knowledge, must come to the mind in a direct manner, without any reasoning taking place. The third kind of knowledge has then a *divine* connotation attached to it.

It is important in Spinoza's theory of emending the intellect to understand why he deems reason to fall short of attaining the highest level of certainty. Spinoza's EIP does clearly need some form of initial reasoning to get underway, which he accommodates in the second kind of knowledge. This should not come as a surprise as I have consistently argued that the human mind is seen to be in need of emendation and that this project entails a process of education. It should be kept in mind though, that the ideas that reason employs in this first level of adequate knowledge are seen to be true.[147] If this were not the case, the early rationalist project of true and certain knowledge could not get off the ground. In my opinion, reason's first step, is to discern or extract certain notions from natural phenomena that all things have in common. A good example of this method of reason is found in the following passage:

> Now in examining natural phenomena we first of all try to discover those features that are most universal and common to the whole of Nature, to wit, motion and rest and the rules governing them which Nature always observes and through which she constantly acts; and then we advance gradually from these to other less universal features. (TTP7 S: 460.)

As discussed earlier with regard to the theory of simple ideas, reason is able to recognize that which is common to all things, that is, the true ideas, which express God's essence (2p40sch2). These are reason's common notions and are adequate

[147] This matter has been discussed earlier. Recall, for Spinoza our given true ideas can never be completely overpowered by inadequate ideas and the ensuing passions. We will seemingly always have some adequate grasp of them. As argued earlier, in early rationalism, even the slightest grasp of a simple idea is seen to be adequate.

conceptions of nature's universal features, but they seem to fall short in convincing us of what such things really are in themselves, i.e. that they express God's eternal and infinite essence. Spinoza seems to think that our ideas of the attributes are entities of reason (entia rationis), without which God's essence cannot be conceived. In CM2/5 he says:

> Finally, what is termed a distinction of reason is that which arises between a substance and its attribute…from the fact that such a substance cannot be understood without its attribute. (S: 195.)

As seen earlier, Spinoza does define an attribute as 'that which the intellect perceives of substance as constituting its essence' (1def4). This view is also found in Spinoza's *letter 9* to Simon de Vries in which he writes that an 'attribute is so called in respect to the intellect, which attributes to substance a certain specific kind of nature' (S: 782). Now the true ideas of the attributes are natures that *we*, i.e. our minds seem to attribute to God. However, for Spinoza, it is only God himself who can reveal or communicate what he really is, i.e. his inmost essence to us. In order for us to have complete certainty of God's essence, his idea must seemingly be given to us in a most direct way. A second consideration for Spinoza's lower grading of the ideas of reason, is that reason's ideas are its dictates that guide us toward the objects to which we *ought* to, in a sense of obedience, attach ourselves. In this sense, reason's ideas do not yet reflect our full self-determination:

> And first of all, the effect of what we have called True Belief. This shows us indeed what a thing ought to be, but not what it really is. And this is the reason why it can never unite us with the object of our belief. I say, then, that it only teaches us what the thing ought to be, and not what it is; between these two there is a great difference. (ST2/4 S: 66.)

It seems then, that at this first level of adequate knowledge, our own intention seems to not yet be fully realized and in this sense these ideas do not express our own activity. These ideas, although certainly true, do not express our self-determination to the highest degree. This lack seems to be the reason that these ideas are unable to unite us with the very essence, which they express, i.e. with God's eternal and infinite

power. If we had our own strong inner conviction in this regard we would necessarily attach ourselves to these objects:

> And from what we have now seen of the effects of all these, it is evident that the fourth, namely clear knowledge, is the most perfect of all. For opinion often leads to error. True belief is good only because it is the way to true knowledge, and awakens us to things which are really lovable. So that the final end that we seek, and the highest that we know, is true knowledge. (ST2/4 S: 67.)

Reason directs us towards those objects that are indeed good for us and in this way surpasses opinion, in which there is no such direction. However and strange as it may seem, the true ideas of reason seem to lack the ability to bring about complete certainty. In Spinoza we can only be truly active, or certain of something if this conviction follows from our nature alone (4app1). Ideas based on opinion, experience or even reason, are all conceived through something else and not through the things themselves:

> But this last one is never (merely) opinion, nor a (mere) believer, but sees things themselves, not through something else, but through the things themselves. (ST2/2 note 7 S: 63.)

I argue that when we actively employ our innate ideas we know things through themselves, which is the highest form of knowledge and certainty in Spinoza.

5.3.2. Intuition and inner certainty

Although Spinoza's philosophy is an example of the early rationalist approach, he does frequently describe the highest form of adequate knowledge, namely intuition, in terms of *feeling* or even *taste.* I argue that it is mostly when considering the highest certainty in our adequate ideas that he turns to notions that express feeling. It is reason that proceeds by convincing us, in a somewhat *external* way, by putting forward its arguments, proofs and dictates in language, whereas the way of intuition is through an *inner* sense of certitude. I claim that such intuitive certainty is based on an intellectual

feeling or experience of certainty that is related to or arises from our innate ideas (my emphasis):

> For, as I have just pointed out, all that we *clearly and distinctly* understand is dictated to us by the idea and the nature of God – *not indeed in words*, but in a far superior way and one that agrees excellently with the nature of the mind, as everyone who has *tasted intellectual certainty* has doubtless experienced in his own case. (TTP1 S: 395.)

> For whatever we understand clearly and distinctly, we understand either through itself or through something else, which is conceived through itself. That is, ideas which are *clear and distinct in us* or which are related to the third kind of knowledge. (5p28dem.)

In the first citation above, Spinoza says that certainty in our adequate ideas cannot be found *in words*, i.e. in language, but must be *tasted* and also that this way is somehow superior. Note in the second quote that Spinoza associates conceiving something through itself with our innate ideas and the third kind of knowledge. At the very start of the TdIE, Spinoza says that he:

> … resolved at length to enquire whether there existed a true good, one which was capable of communicating itself and could alone affect the mind to the exclusion of all else, whether, in fact, there was something whose discovery and acquisition would afford me a continuous and supreme joy to all eternity. (TdIE§1.)

As suggested earlier, for Spinoza, the idea of our highest good *communicates itself* to us and *affects the mind to the exclusion of all else.* In my reading of Spinoza, God communicates his essence to us by means of his innate idea:

> We may quite clearly understand that God can communicate with man without mediation, for he communicates his essence to our minds without employing corporeal means. (TTP1 S: 398.)

God's innate idea of his essence in our minds seems then to differ quite significantly from reason's ideas of the attributes, which are ideas that we attribute to God. When we become fully aware of our innate ideas and actively partake of them, the direction of this action is from and through our innate ideas themselves. When we know things by the third kind of knowledge, we proceed from the innate ideas of God's essence to the knowledge of the essences of things (2p40sch2). This is clearly different to the procedure of reason, where we first discern that which is common to all things and then form conceptions of the universal features of things, which we deem to express God's essence.[148] The citation from the TdIE above, suggests that our innate idea of God also *affects* us in a powerful way and this indicates that some form of feeling is involved when we experience the certainty of God's idea in us (my emphasis):

> But we call that clear knowledge which comes, not from our being convinced by reasons, but from our *feeling* and *enjoying* the thing itself, and it surpasses the others by far. (ST2/2 S: 63.)

> It is quite true that (when there are reasons which prompt us to do so) we can, in words or by some other means, represent the thing to others differently from what we know it to be; but we can never bring it so far, either by words or by any other means, that we should feel about things differently from what we feel about them; that is impossible, and *clearly so to all who have for once attended to their understanding itself apart from the use of words or other significant signs.* (ST2/16 S: 82.)

The convictions of reason are based on arguments and demonstrations that take place *outside* the mind (so to speak) and, seemingly, do not strike the mind with the same

[148] In order for reason to be able to produce true ideas it must, in some way, also make use of our innate ideas. It does however seem that we are not fully aware of this and that reason does therefore not yet fully partake of our innate ideas. Arnold Geulincx, the Flemish contemporary of Spinoza, develops a form of logic in which the highest form of knowledge has much to do with the inner intellectual activities of the mind, of which we are *immediately conscious*, without any help or dependence on the body. Geulincx also distinguishes logic from mathematics, which he sees as still having some dependence on the senses and the imagination (Nuchelmans 1988: 8-13). This notion of an immediate consciousness of our true ideas seems much the same as Spinoza's intuitive knowledge.

force as when the mind experiences an inner intuitive certainty.[149] Intuition appears to produce a more powerful and immediate *inner sense of certainty* and in this it differs and surpasses reason. In Spinoza, complete certitude depends on our own inner sense or feeling of conviction, which arises from the inner teaching of our innate ideas. Our innate ideas, when fully conscious, are clear and distinct and the mind is unchecked in its consent of these ideas. The mind feels no pain with regard to these ideas, only its unrestricted activity and joy (5p18dem; 3p11).

I argue that, although both reason and intuition work with true ideas, there seems then to be an important difference between them. God's innate idea is much different from reason's ideas of God's attributes, which are likened to ideas based on distinctions of reason. Intuitive knowledge seems to also differ from reason in that it does not, like reason, have a *bottom-up* approach, but rather seems to proceed in a *top-down* manner, proceeding from its innate ideas of God's essence to the essences of things (2p40sch2). Another difference is that Spinoza attributes a higher sense of certainty to follow from intuition. The sense I can make of this, is that once reason has produced the true idea or definition of God, this leads to the realization that the source of this true conception must be the given idea of God in us. This insight fully *activates* the innate idea of God and unites us with God. Our innate true ideas seem to bring with them their own sense of intuitive certainty and this is, for Spinoza, the highest form of knowing, which he also refers to as the third kind of knowledge.[150]

The outcome of the above should not seem out of place in Spinoza's rationalist system and the two actions of the intellect, reason and intuition, should be seen to interact and complement each other, in my view. It is, however, important to keep in mind that intuitive certainty *follows* from reason. In Spinoza, certainty cannot be achieved, without reason first having established its true ideas, in accordance with his rationalist method of knowledge. Intuitive knowledge in Spinoza is, in my view, never cut loose from reason. The certainty of intuition can only follow from the conviction of reason, which is based on clear concepts and logical rational

[149] Van Ruler (2008: 169-173) aptly describes Spinoza's notion of intuitive knowledge as the 'adequate knowledge of internal states' and also likens knowledge of the third kind to the Platonist notion of reason as the inner teacher.

[150] Descartes seems to have a similar theory of a highest form of knowledge. This is knowledge of the innate idea of God, which produces the awareness of our total dependence on him for every single moment of our entire existence. Descartes says in the fourth Meditation that the idea of our continual containment in God surpasses all other ideas and 'that the human intellect cannot know anything that is more evident or more certain' (DSPW: 99).

argumentation: Spinoza confirms this critical point in the following citation (my emphasis):

> *For the love of God arises from the knowledge of God*, a knowledge deriving from general axioms that are certain and self-evident. (TTP4 S: 429.)[151]

However, it seems then that reason, on its own, is not able to lead us to the highest good, i.e. our intellectual perfection (Youpa 2009: 245). It is up to the knowledge of the third kind or intuition to *unite* us to the highest good, which is the most perfect idea, the idea of God, or God himself. This unification with the *divine* truth in thought has much to do with Spinoza's theory that our intellect is involved in God's eternal and infinite intellect. Reason demonstrates the truth of this doctrine but it is by intuition that we experience this to be indeed true. From this intuitive experience the highest degree of certainty follows, accompanied by a feeling of intellectual joy. This intuitive insight leads to the highest level of knowledge, to which Spinoza mostly refers in terms of *love*. This Platonist-Augustinian theme of intellectual love for God is quite beautiful and found throughout Spinoza's writings and reaches its highest point in the second part of E5. This continuous theme in his writings is illustrated in the following citations:

> …all happiness or unhappiness depends solely on the quality of the object to which we are bound by love. For strife will never arise on account of that which is not loved…But love towards a thing eternal and infinite feeds the mind with joy alone, unmixed with any sadness. This is greatly to be desired, and to be sought with all our might. (TdIE§10.)

> Since, then, Reason has no power to lead us to the attainment of our well – being, it remains for us to inquire whether we can attain it through … the last, kind of knowledge. Now we have said that this kind of knowledge does not result from something else, but from a direct revelation of the object itself to the understanding. And if that object is glorious and good, then the soul becomes

[151] Spinoza, in my opinion, employs this distinction between reason and intuition to restrict human reason to an extent. For Spinoza, our certain knowledge of the essence of things depends on God's expression of his essence to us.

necessarily united with it, as we have also remarked with reference to our body. Hence, it follows incontrovertibly that it is this knowledge which evokes love. (ST2/22 S: 93.)

From the third kind of knowledge there necessarily arises the intellectual love of God (amor Dei intellectualis). For from this kind of knowledge there arises pleasure accompanied by the idea of God as cause…And this is what I call the intellectual love of God. (5p32cor.)[152]

5.3.3. Proportion

Spinoza consistently uses the example of proportion in his writings to illustrate the difference between the types of knowledge that he distinguishes in his system.[153] This example, however, seems to have baffled interpreters more than helping to explain the difference he conceives between the three knowledge types and especially between reason and intuition. The example involves an arithmetic puzzle in which the ratio between numbers must be solved in the best manner. The main gist of the example,

[152] The theory of the two actions of the intellect, in Spinoza, seems to have some religious undertones. The way of reason, in Spinoza is also likened to the obedience or obligation shown towards a law. This needs to be supplemented by the inner realization of the truth of the law and an inner desire to comply with the law. The latter refers to the action of the mind when it truly understands. A very interesting text in this regard is found in TTP4, which is titled *Of the Divine Law*. The main points in this text can be outlined as follows: Firstly, Spinoza says that the natural light of reason is the Divine law or the method ordained or legislated by God in order for man to achieve his highest perfection. For Spinoza, as we have seen, mankind's highest perfection is the knowledge of God. The best way of doing this, in the terminology of the TTP, is 'to love God not through fear of punishment nor through some other thing such as sensual pleasure, fame and so forth, but from the mere fact that he knows God, or knows that the knowledge and love of God is the supreme good. So the sum of the Divine law and its chief command is to love God as the supreme good; that is, as we have said, not from fear of some punishment or penalty nor from love of some other thing from which we desire to derive pleasure. For this truth is told us by the idea of God, that God is our supreme good, i.e. that the knowledge of God is the final end to which all our actions should be directed (S: 428). Secondly, Spinoza thought it impossible to truly love God on the basis of an inadequate idea of him. Mankind, in his view, had developed many inadequate anthropomorphic ideas of God that had not led to the true love of God, but had rather resulted in a most bitter hatred and conflict between people. We have discussed the role of philosophy as a medicine for the mind (*medicina mentis*), which is aimed at healing the mind of mankind by developing, first and foremost, a true idea of God, devoid of all inadequate anthropomorphic notions. This, as we have seen, is the task allocated to reason. It is only after this true idea of God has been established and the nature of God is truly known, that the idea of God is affirmed and God can be loved. Spinoza says: 'Nor can the belief in historical narratives, however certain, give us knowledge of God, nor consequently of the love of God. *For the love of God arises from the knowledge of God, a knowledge deriving from general axioms that are certain and self-evident* (my emphasis)' (ibid.: 429). In the terminology of the TTP, the love of God (understanding) follows from the knowledge of God (the rational proof), which is the same as saying that the third kind of knowledge follows from the second kind of knowledge.

[153] This example is found in the TdIE§23,24, the ST2/1 and in 2p40sch2.

with regard to reason and intuition, is that whereas reason solves the puzzle correctly by applying certain rules, intuition sees the ratio or proportion between the given numbers *directly* and finds the missing number without any reasoning involved.[154]One of the reasons for this example being rather unclear is that Spinoza gives very little additional explanation. In the *Short Treatise,* however, Spinoza does say something more about this subject that is not found in the other sections, which deal with this topic. In the section of the *Short Treatise* he considers the difference between the second and third kinds of knowledge and says the following about the latter (my emphasis):

> But when he comes to see the proportion in the way which we have shown in the fourth example, then he says with truth that the thing is so, *because then it is in him and not beyond him.* (ST2/4 S: 66.)

As I have argued, the highest form of knowledge has much to do with our innate ideas. However, intuition has also much to do with conceiving particular things adequately and one wonders what the notion of proportion has to do with knowing particular things adequately? Perhaps the notion of proportion in Spinoza's theory of knowledge can be better understood if its relation to knowing particular things is explained. The citation below confirms, that intuition is favored by Spinoza, when it comes to the adequate knowledge of particular things:[155]

> I have thought this worth noting here in order to show … the superiority of that knowledge of particular things which I have called 'intuitive' or 'of the third kind', and its preferability to that abstract knowledge which I have called 'knowledge of the second kind'. (5p36sch.)

In the first part of the *Ethics* reason proves that particular things are affections of God's attributes or modes of God, which cannot be or be conceived without God (1def5; 1p15). However, conceiving particular things intellectually as modes or proportions of God's essence is seen by Spinoza to be quite a difficult challenge

[154] In the puzzle three numbers are given and it is required to find a fourth, which is related to the third as the second is to the first. In the case of the numbers 1,2,3, the missing proportional is 6.
[155] See also 2p40sch2; 5p24 and 5p36sch.

(1p15sch; Ep12). This difficulty stems in part from Spinoza's system, which requires that particular things cannot be seen to follow directly from God's absolute nature. Particular things are determined to exist in a certain manner by other things, which are also determined and finite (1p28dem). However, this conception could lead to the conclusion that God is only a remote cause of particular things, which seems to contradict Spinoza's view that all things are wholly and continuously dependent on God's concurrent essence or power, for both their essence and their existence. Whilst the proofs of reason regarding particular things, that they cannot be or be conceived without God is true, it 'does not strike the mind as when it is inferred from the essence of each particular thing, which we assert to be dependent on God' (5p36sch).

Intuition seems then to overcome the somewhat abstract nature of reason, when we intuitively know or sense, firstly, our own dependence on God and then assert with certainty that all particular things do indeed depend on God's concurrent power (2p45sch). This close relation between the highest form of knowledge and the inner experience of our total dependence on God is already found in the earlier *Short Treatise*:

> …so long as we have not such a clear idea of God as shall unite us with him in such a way that it will not let us love anything beside him, we cannot truly say that we are united with God as to depend immediately on him. (ST1/2nd dialogue S: 50.)

The crucial point here is that our total dependence on God for our essence and existence, is best experienced intellectually, i.e. by becoming fully conscious of the innate idea of God's essence. In my opinion, this occurs when we become aware of the significance of our own innate true ideas and realize that, such ideas can only originate in God and must therefore also be continuously sustained by God's thinking force. The conclusion that follows is that our finite intellect, in which these most certain ideas reside, must therefore be a proportion of God's infinite intellect. Our joy stems from the realization that our finite intellect inheres directly and continuously in the very essence of Thought, i.e. in God. Seeing that the intellect is regarded as our human essence, the important insight is that our essence and existence follows directly from God (5p36sch). In another passage from the Short Treatise Spinoza says (my addition):

> And since God has produced it (true understanding) immediately and he is only an inner cause, it follows necessarily that it cannot perish so long as this cause of it remains … Now this cause of it is eternal, therefore it is too. (ST2/26 S: 101.)

I argue that Spinoza's EIP is aimed at leading us to the conscious discovery of the innate idea of God, through which we are intimately united with God in a most direct and certain manner. Whereas reason argues for and proves this (1p21dem), intuition experiences and feels this to be true with certainty. The action of reason is more external, whereas intuition produces an inner certainty and in this surpasses reason.
Based on our own experience of the dependence of our mind on the inner idea of God we can assert with confidence that all particular things do indeed follow from God and depend continuously on his eternal power. In my view then, the somewhat mysterious role of proportion in Spinoza's theory of knowledge has to do with the early rationalist notion that the best kind of knowledge follows from the inner conviction of the mind. This kind of knowledge is seen to be *in us and not beyond us*. This is also the best way of knowing that particular things, all depend wholly on God's concurrent power for their being.

In this section Spinoza's theory of adequate knowledge has been considered and I have mainly attended to the two actions of the intellect, that of reason and intuition. I have argued that both the above actions of the mind work with and produce true ideas. In the project of human perfection, i.e. the EIP, it is reason that directs and identifies the objects to which we ought to attach ourselves. It is however intuition that unites us with these objects, the most important being God himself. I have argued, finally, that these actions of the mind work together and complement each other. Reason precedes intuition and presents the mind with demonstrations as to what the true essence of things ought to be. It is then the task of intuition to confirm these proofs as certainly true. This leads to an inner certainty, with which the active emotions such as joy and self – contentment co-occur. The highest intellectual perfection and final goal of the EIP follows, namely, the amor Dei intellectualis.

5.4. The passions

Spinoza makes it quite clear that the EIP is not to be understood as a purely intellectual affair. The emendation of the intellect involves certain demanding real life struggles[156], one of which is against the passions, which is quite a common theme in early modern philosophy. For Spinoza there is a close relationship between the emendation of the intellect and the passions, because, for him, the cause of the passions[157] does not lie in the body, but rather in inadequate knowledge (ST2/19 S: 90). Spinoza's remedy against the passions is true and certain knowledge, which must be applied to an ailing mind as a *medicina mentis*. I argue that, although *both* the actions of the intellect, that is, reason and intuition, are employed in this struggle against the passions, that intuition, once again, seems to deliver the more potent and decisive blow. The main cause of the passions, for Spinoza, is that the mind attaches itself to transient things (such as honor, riches and pleasures) and this leads to disappointment, confusion and subsequent passions:

> He, therefore, is indeed always wretched who is united to transient things. For since these are beyond his power, and subject to many accidents, it is impossible that, when they are affected, he should be free from these affects. (ST2/5 S: 69.)

> And since we find that, when we pursue sensuousness, pleasure, and worldly things, we do not find our happiness in them, but on the contrary, our ruin. (ST2/26 S: 100.)

In Spinoza's system, all things are contained in and follow from God and nothing can be regarded to be really bad or evil, but the attachment to particular material things is seen to not bring lasting joy and contentment, due to their uncertain nature. For Spinoza the life of carnal man, which is mostly attached to and fixated on a sensual life related to the body, will eventually be found to be unsatisfactory, because of its

[156] It is clear that the EIP is a difficult undertaking and we need to look after many practical issues, such as our health, and also seek the support of like-minded, friends. The role of the state is also required if the EIP is ever to become realized in society. See in this regard in the TdIE§14-17. The fourth part of the *Ethics* also deals with such matters, for example 4p73; 4app7; 9; 12 and 27.

[157] Spinoza's theory of the passions is sometimes compared to that of Plato and found to be similar, for example James (2009: 223). Spinoza's theory is in my view quite different in that he does not think that the passions can be blamed on the body (ST2/19 S: 90).

transitory nature. Because we are necessarily part of nature (4p4), no matter how diligent we are, our individual aspirations are continually thwarted and inevitably threatened by forces beyond human control (4app32). When our *worldly* goods, to which we are attached, are negatively affected, the passions ensue. The realization of our externally determined existence and vulnerability to forces beyond our control also leads to sadness and despair. As said earlier, for Spinoza, things are seen to be beyond our control to the extent that we have knowledge of their causal nexus and sense perception cannot assist us much in this regard.

5.4.1. Reason and the passions

How does reason then assist us in our struggle against our passive emotions? For Spinoza, reasons's important task is to guide us towards the objects that are best suited for our wellbeing. Our best interest depends largely on the type of objects for which we strive and to which we attach ourselves in love. In Spinoza, we necessarily attach ourselves to those things that the mind judges or affirms to be good. As said, our minds consist of many ideas, some of which are inadequate. When we follow ideas based on opinion, hearsay or on casual experience, that is, notions received from the senses in a confused manner, we attach ourselves to things that are transient and cannot give us lasting joy and self-contentment. For Spinoza, the task of reason is to lead us away from such things and towards intransient objects to which we ought to join ourselves. Spinoza's method is based on becoming aware of those things that are in our best interest by distinguishing between the different kinds of ideas in our mind. Whereas inadequate and uncertain ideas signify the contingent nature of their objects, our true ideas indicate intransient essences, which we should love. Our minds are purified and our intellect is emended insofar we cease to follow and utilize our inadequate ideas. Our adequate ideas are of intransient essences (God's attributes) that do really exist outside of the mind. For Spinoza the highest and most perfect object to which we ought to attach ourselves is, of course, God himself. However, as argued earlier, the dictates of reason, which are likened to moral laws can only externally direct or admonish us toward the objects to which we ought to attach ourselves. Although the ideas of reason are true and can be trusted, they seem not able to actually unite us with what is best for us. This can only happen when we judge

something to be good through our own inner affirmation or conviction. This seems to happen, for Spinoza, when reasons's true ideas resonate with our innate ideas.

Reasons further role is to assist us in reducing the influence of our passive emotions. Through reason we can form adequate ideas of the passions and consequently bring it about that we become less passive in respect of them (Def. of the Emotions; 5p3; 5p4sch). By applying reason 'we have the ability to arrange and associate affections of the body according to the order of the intellect' (5p10dem) and 'to conceive a right method of living, or fixed rules of life, and to commit them to memory and continually apply them to particular situations that are frequently encountered in life, so that our casual thinking is thoroughly permeated by them and they are always ready to hand' (5p10sch). In addition to this, it is also the task of reason to develop certain rational virtues that can be followed by those undertaking the EIP. Such virtues are strength of mind (*fortitudo*), courage (*animositas*), nobility (*generositas*), courtesy (*modestia*) and mercy (*clementia*). These are the virtues that we should follow 'according to the dictates of reason alone' (3p59sch). These principles play a crucial role in steadying and guiding our *lifeboat* when 'we are in many respects at the mercy of external causes and are tossed about like the waves of the sea when driven by contrary winds unsure of the outcome and of our fate' (ibid). Reason then plays an important role in bringing some order and discipline in our lives, to avoid excess, which often leads to the passions and impedes our progress in the EIP (4app30).

5.4.2. Intuition and the passions

However, reason seems unable to bring about the desired unification with our highest perfection and summum bonum:

> I think, now, that I have already shown and proved sufficiently that it is only True Belief or Reason that leads us to the knowledge of good and evil. And so when we come to prove that knowledge is the first and principal cause of all these passions, it will be clearly manifest that if we use our understanding and Reason aright, it should be impossible for us to ever fall prey to one of these passions which we ought to reject. I say our *Understanding*, because I do not

> think that Reason alone is competent to free us from all these: as we shall afterwards show in its proper place. (ST2/14 S: 78.)

Spinoza assigns an important role to intuition or knowledge of the third kind in the struggle against the passions. The basis for this theory has much to do with Spinoza's notion of affirmation or intellectual love. Recall that it is the attachment to uncertain transient things that, in Spinoza's view, leads to the passions. In his view, the attachment to an object, even to something of a contingent nature, can only be broken by love towards a more perfect object:

> Love, then, arises from the idea and knowledge we have of a thing; and according as the thing shows itself greater and more glorious, so also is our love greater. In two ways is it possible to free ourselves from love: either by getting to know something better, or by discovering that the loved object, which is held by us to be something great and glorious, brings in its train much woe and disaster. (ST2/5 S: 68.)

We find a similar argument in the Ethics where Spinoza actually says that the third kind of knowledge is very effective against the passions:

> …we can readily conceive how effective against the emotions is clear and distinct knowledge, and especially the third kind of knowledge whose basis is the knowledge of God. (5p20sch.)

I argued earlier in this section that intuition is closely associated with the innate idea of God's essence. For Spinoza, God's idea in us is the most perfect true and certain idea. Our true ideas are of the God's essence and it is by becoming aware of such ideas and understanding their significance, that we become attached to God. The love of God, which must necessarily follow from the true idea of God, is a love that is much more powerful than the love of or attachment to any idea of a transient thing. A human being, whose mind is attached to the true idea of God, is necessarily filled with the love of God and cannot, it seems, succumb easily to the passions. For Spinoza, when someone has progressed to the threshold of intellectual perfection, it is impossible not to affirm the true idea of God and to intellectually be united with him

in love (ST2/5 S: 69; ST2/19 S: 89). For Spinoza we will necessarily attach ourselves to something, which we regard with certainty as our highest good. The third kind of knowledge, which is based on the innate idea of God, also produces the highest pleasure (5p32def) and this also helps to reduce the seductive power of transient objects. Spinoza adds to this that the innate idea of God enables us to produce many other true ideas and increase the amount of adequate ideas in our minds. This results in a greater part of the mind being 'unimpaired, and consequently less subject to the emotions' (5p38def). It seems then that intuitive knowledge is a more powerful tool in fighting the passions than reason. Reason does play an important role, but it does not seem to have the power base that intuition has, to unite us with God in a most direct way. Reason is seen to dictate to us, whereas intuition or the innate idea of God, can be likened to an inner teacher by which we are able to have complete certainty of our true ideas, which we then follow with total confidence. The important role of intuition in combating the passions becomes very clear in the final proposition of the *Ethics* where Spinoza writes his famous words:

> Blessedness is not the reward of virtue, but virtue itself. We do not enjoy blessedness because we keep our lusts in check. On the contrary, it is because we enjoy blessedness that we are able to keep our lusts in check… Again the more the mind enjoys this divine love or blessedness, the more it understands; that is the more power it has over the emotions and the less subject it is to emotions that are bad. (5p42; 5p42dem.)

I conclude then, that also in the struggle against the passions, both the actions of the intellect, reason and intuition, play an important but different role. The roles of the two actions can be distinguished from one another but not separated. They seem to always work together and to complement each other.[158]

[158] It is notable that Spinoza seems to work with a characterization of mankind that fits his theory of different stages or kinds of knowledge. In this regard we find the distinctions in Spinoza between *carnal ignorant man*, *rational free man* and *intuitive wise man* in his works. To this we can add that Spinoza regards the first to be unconscious of himself (5p42sch), the second to be self-conscious and content (4p52) and the third to be spiritually content (5p42sch).

6. Certitude and Eternity

I argue that, for Spinoza, the discovery of the innate idea of God's essence is regarded as mankind's highest intellectual perfection and supreme good and the attainment of eternal joy and self-contentment. Recall Spinoza's words in the opening paragraph of the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*:

> I resolved at length to enquire whether their existed a true good, one which was capable of communicating itself and could alone effect the mind to the exclusion of all else, whether in fact, there was something whose discovery and acquisition would afford me a continuous and supreme joy to all eternity. (TdIE§1.)

For Spinoza, the source of the mind's discontent is its sensory ideas, which are partial and mutilated and consequently restrict its conatus or affirming essence, which leads to the loss of force and the feeling of pain (3p11). Adequate ideas, on the other hand, agree fully with their *ideatum* and can be completely affirmed or consented to by the mind without restriction. Because adequate ideas do not check the mind's affirming force, this leads to the highest active emotion, the feeling of intellectual certainty and joy. For Spinoza, the mind can only be content if it has the assurance that its clear and distinct ideas are true. It has been established that, for Spinoza, having clear and distinct ideas amounts to the mind possessing adequate ideas of God's essence.

> The idea of God which is in us is adequate and perfect…Therefore, insofar as we contemplate God, we are active…Consequently, there can be no pain accompanied by the idea of God; that is, nobody can hate God. (5p18dem.)

> …all that we clearly and distinctly understand is dictated to us by the idea and nature of God – not indeed in words, but in a far superior way and one that agrees excellently with the nature of the mind, as everyone who has tasted intellectual certainty has doubtless experienced in his own case. (TTP1 S: 395.)

> And since true salvation and blessedness consist in true contentment of mind and we find our true peace only in what we clearly understand. (TTP7 S: 467.)

As argued, Descartes and Spinoza both align our perfection with the mind, insofar as it has adequate ideas, that is, ideas of God's essence. In this sense, the mind is seen as our *better part*. However, Spinoza only associates our true ideas with a part of the mind, the intellect, which consists of two actions, that of reason and intuition. The other part of the mind, the imagination, has to do with incomplete sensory ideas arising from sense perception. In the previous chapter Spinoza's theory of knowledge was discussed and the attention was drawn to his distinction between the second and third kinds of adequate knowledge, that of reason and intuition. I argue that the important difference between these two types of adequate knowledge is that the latter *unites* us intellectually with God, when we become conscious of the idea of God in us and start to actively employ it in our thinking. In Spinoza, intuition is regarded as the highest form of knowledge, which leads to the intellectual love of God and the highest level of joy and self-contentment that mankind can attain. I argue that the third kind of knowledge also delivers the highest form of certitude, which is to experience and enjoy the bliss of intellectual certainty.

Now, this highest form of knowledge or the *amor dei intellectualis*, which is also the highest achievement of the emendation of the intellect, is closely associated with Spinoza's quite famous theory of the eternity of the mind. In my view, the successful completion of the EIP hinges crucially on the discovery of the mind's eternity. I will show in this chapter that Spinoza's theory of the mind's eternity is an indispensible element in his search for epistemological certitude (my emphasis):

> …the wise man, insofar as he is considered as such, suffers scarcely any disturbance of spirit, but by being conscious, by virtue of a *certain eternal necessity*, of himself, of God and of things, never ceases to be, but always possesses true spiritual contentment. (5p42sch.)

That said, it is however well known, that Spinoza's theory of the eternity of the mind is quite obscure and troublesome.[159] Nevertheless, an explication of Spinoza's theory of emending the intellect, which I undertake in this work, should include an attempt,

[159] Spinoza scholars have encountered many difficulties with this doctrine of the minds eternity as found in the second part of E5. See for example Curley (1988: 84) and Bennett (1984: 357,372).

at least, to clarify his theory of the mind's eternity.[160] This undertaking is however a demanding task in its own right and something that I cannot do full justice to in this chapter. I will not present an in-depth and detailed discussion of this matter, but will only attempt to clarify the important role of this theory for Spinoza's EIP. My aim is to explicate the role that this theory plays in his pursuit of epistemological certitude, the continuous theme of this work. I argue that certainty with regard to our adequate ideas depends crucially on the intuition of God's concurring thinking force and I claim that the function of the theory of the eternity of the mind in Spinoza is to support the project of attaining epistemological certitude and not to produce some notion of personal immortality.[161]

6.1. The nature of the intellect

Towards the end of the TdIE, Spinoza asks the important question:

> … whether there is a being – and also what kind of being – which is the cause of all things so that its essence represented in thought is also the cause of all our ideas. (TdIE§99.)

He then goes on to say, that in order to investigate this question as to 'the first of all things' we need to first 'enquire what we understand by the faculties and power of the intellect' (ibid.§105,106). In order for the intellect to confidently produce the definition of God, we need to first have an adequate idea of its own nature. What Spinoza seems to be saying is that, before the definition of God is attempted, we must ascertain if the intellect is indeed able to successfully undertake such an important intellectual task. The answer to this question should become apparent if we have an adequate idea of its nature. The last passages of the treatise are then intent on discovering an adequate idea of the nature of intellect. In accordance with the method that Spinoza develops in the TdIE, the best way of investigating the nature of

[160] It is significant in my opinion that Spinoza's theory of the mind's eternity is found *throughout* his writings and not only in the second part of E5. See for example in his early writings the TdIE§1,10 and the ST2/23,26,app2. In my view this theory forms an integral part of Spinoza's whole philosophy, from start to finish.

[161] For Nadler an eternal mind in Spinoza is 'nothing but a body of knowledge…cut off from any kind of consciousness…and no abiding sense of personhood' (2006: 271).

something is by means of a good definition. However, Spinoza seems to think that there is a difficulty in defining the intellect at this point:

> Now since the chief part of our Method is to achieve a good understanding of the powers of the intellect and its nature, we are necessarily constrained (through considerations set out in this second part of our Method) to deduce these simply from the definition of thought and the intellect. But so far we have not had any rules for finding definitions; and since we cannot treat of these rules without knowing the nature or definition of the intellect and its power, it follows that either the definition of the intellect must be self - evident or we cannot understand anything. But that definition is not absolutely self-evident. (TdIE§106,7.)

In accordance with Rule seven of Descartes's *Regulae,* if the nature or definition of some object of our investigation is not readily at hand, the next best step to take is to enumerate the properties of that which we seek to know or define.[162] Spinoza follows the same procedure:

> Nevertheless, since its properties – like everything we have from the intellect – can be clearly and distinctly perceived only if their nature is known, the definition of intellect will become self-evident if we attend to its properties that we do understand clearly and distinctly. (TdIE§107.)

The argument seems to be that if we do have adequate ideas of something, this then implies that the nature of the thing is already, perhaps latently, known to us. As discussed in chapter four on Spinoza's method in the TdIE, he hereafter proceeds to list the clear and distinct properties or ideas of the intellect (ibid.§108). The treatise ends shortly hereafter with Spinoza seeking to establish some 'common basis' from which the properties of the intellect necessarily follow. In his words such a basis that 'when given, necessarily entails these properties, and when removed, removes them all' (ibid.§110). As is known, the TdIE is unfinished and, unfortunately, Spinoza does not get round to do this.

[162] See the discussion of this in Rule 7 of the *Regulae* (CSM I: 25-6).

Following the early rationalist method, for us to perceive something clearly and distinctly, the nature of the thing investigated must be known or given to us. If, however, the nature of the thing is not clearly evident we should then consider if its properties are not perhaps clear and distinct. If this is the case, then its nature will be clearly apparent through its properties. For Spinoza, the properties of the intellect are indeed clear and distinct. One of the intellect's clear and distinct properties is:

> It perceives things not so much under duration as under some form of eternity, and as being of infinite number. Or rather, in its perception of things, it attends neither to number nor duration. But when it imagines things, it perceives them as being of fixed number, with determinate duration and quantity. (TdIE§108.)

It is notable that Spinoza seems to follow the method that he developed in the TdIE in the second section of the fifth part of the *Ethics,* in which he explicates his theory of the eternity of the mind.[163] In this section he seeks to discover the nature of the intellect and to do so he investigates one of its properties, that, when the intellect conceives things, it does so in the light of eternity or *sub quadam specie aeternitatis* (5p29sch). The role of this notion in Spinoza's theory of the mind's eternity will be the subject of the following section.

6.1.1. Perceiving things *sub quadam specie aeternitatis*

For Spinoza, the human mind consists of two parts, i.e. the *imagination* and the *intellect*. The former is associated with sense perception and the latter with the adequate idea of God and also other true ideas that can be inferred from the former. The two so-called *parts* of the mind conceive things in quite different ways. Whereas the imagination perceives things under a form of duration, the intellect conceives things under some form of eternity or *sub quadam specie aeternitatis*. The sensory ideas in the mind, formed by the imagination are incomplete and therefore inadequate. The ideas of the intellect however are possessed in full and are therefore regarded as adequate. Recall from the previous chapter that Spinoza conceives two actions of the intellect, i.e. reason and intuition and I argue that the adequate way of perceiving

[163] It is notable that notion of *conceiving things in the light of eternity* is mentioned by name eighteen times in the section (5p21-5p31).

things in the light of eternity is employed by both reason and intuition, but in different ways, which I will explicate in what follows.[164]

This dual way of perceiving things is already found in the second part of the *Ethics* where it is firstly attributed to the way in which *reason* conceives things:

> Furthermore, the basic principles of reason are those notions, which explicate what is common to all things, and do not explicate the essence of any particular thing, and therefore must be conceived without any relation to time, but in the light of eternity. (2p44cor2dem.)

This way of perceiving things is especially prominent in the second section of the fifth part of the *Ethics*, where a somewhat different aspect of this way of conceiving is, I argue, assigned to *intuition*:

> We conceive things as actual in two ways: either insofar as we conceive them as related to a fixed time and place, or insofar as we conceive them to be contained in God and to follow from the necessity of the divine nature. Now the things that are conceived as true or real in this second way, we conceive under a form of eternity, and their ideas involve the eternal and infinite essence of God … (5p29sch.)

Before attending to the possible different ways in which reason and intuition conceive things in the light of eternity, I will here point out what seems basic to both reason and intuition in this so-called second way of perceiving things. Firstly, when we perceive things in the light of eternity we necessarily employ our adequate ideas of God's essence, irrespective of whether it is reason or intuition that is doing it. Secondly, when we employ our adequate ideas, i.e. the idea of God's eternal and infinite essence, it is only that which things have in common that is conceived, and not the 'essence of any particular thing'.[165] As argued earlier, when a particular thing is conceived adequately, the aspects pertaining to its durational existence are necessarily left out. The certain manner in which particular things exist, such as their

[164] As discussed in the previous chapter, Spinoza does not distinguish between reason and intuition in the TdIE.

[165] For Nadler (2001: 121) conceiving things in the light of eternity 'is not connected to the actual existence of any finite, particular thing, least of all the existence in time of the human body'.

individual natures, where or when or for how long they exist and so forth are not attended to. Ideas of the aspects pertaining to the durational existence of things are assigned to sensory ideas and not to adequate knowledge. I argue that when the intellect (reason or intuition) perceives a particular thing it necessarily conceives it in the light of eternity, and that which is common to all things is conceived (2p44cordem).

Now, I argue that reason and intuition differ when perceiving things under a form of eternity. In my view when reason conceives particular things in the light of eternity the 'basic principles of reason' (2p44cor2dem) are applied, i.e. the true ideas of the attributes and the common notions and this does produce an adequate, albeit a rather abstract way of conceiving particular things (5p36sch). However, when intuition conceives things in the light of eternity it seems to rather focus on the inmost essence by which particular things exist and continue to exist as far as they can, i.e. God's very essence or his power:

> Nevertheless, there is necessarily in God an idea which expresses the essence of this or that human body under a form of eternity. (5p22.)

> God is the cause not only of the existence of this or that human body but also of its essence, which must therefore necessarily be received through God's essence by a certain eternal necessity, and this conception must necessarily be in God. (5p22dem.)

As I read the passages cited above, what intuition conceives in the light of eternity is *the essence of this or that human body…which must necessarily be received through God's essence by a certain eternal necessity*. As argued, the *essence* to which Spinoza refers in the above, seeing that it is conceived in the light of eternity, cannot refer to anything individual pertaining to a particular thing, and should in my view, rather be seen to refer to *something* basic which all particular things have in common. In my view, Spinoza seems to here have something more fundamental in mind than the rather abstract common ideas or notions of the attributes and the immediate infinite modes. As I see it, the notion of essence, that is involved when intuition perceives things in the light of eternity, refers to the very core of reality, to that which is most fundamental and inmost to *all* things. Moreover, Spinoza says that this common

essence of things is *necessarily received through God's essence*. I think it is perhaps helpful to refer here to a similar line of thinking found in the preface to the fourth part of the *Ethics* (my emphasis):

> For nothing belongs to the nature of anything except that which follows from the necessity of the nature of its efficient cause; and whatever follows from the necessity of the nature of its efficient cause must necessarily be so.

For Spinoza, God is the efficient cause of the essence and existence of things (1p25) and it seems that the *essence* common to *all* things must follow directly from God's very essence. For Spinoza, God's very essence is his eternal and infinite power and the *something* which the knowledge of the third kind perceives, that is common to all things and is contained in God and follows from the necessity of the divine nature and involves the idea of God's essence, is the *conatus*, i.e. the endeavor of all things to persist in their own being (3p6dem). God's power 'whereby he and all things are and act' (1p34dem) is the fundamental essence that is common to all things and it is this essence, I argue, which the knowledge of the third kind conceives, when it understands things in the light of eternity. This very essence is contained in God's essence and follows from the necessity of the divine essence and must necessarily be so for all things. When it perceives things in the light of eternity, intuition conceives the inmost nature of our universe, i.e. the one, eternal and infinite essence of God or his power. This reading will be explored further a bit later in this chapter.

To reiterate, how should the two different actions of the intellect - that of reason and intuition - be understood with regard to conceiving things in the light of eternity? Firstly, *both* reason and intuition conceive things adequately and in the light of eternity and are focused on perceiving that which is common to all things. On the one hand, by applying the basic principles of reason, i.e. the common ideas or notions, reason or knowledge of the second kind, adequately conceives that which is common to all bodies and to all ideas. The knowledge of the third kind, on the other hand, also perceives things in the light of eternity but is rather focused on intuiting God's very essence or power by which all particular things exist and persist in their being. Spinoza does, in my view, already introduce this role of intuition in the second part of the *Ethics*:

> Here by existence I do not mean duration, that is, existence insofar as it is considered in the abstract as a kind of quantity. I am speaking of the very nature of existence, which is attributed to particular things because they follow in infinite numbers in infinite ways from the eternal necessity of God's nature (1p16). I am speaking, I repeat, of the very existence of particular things insofar as they are in God. For although each particular thing is determined by another particular thing to exist in a certain manner, the force by which each perseveres in existing follows from the eternal necessity of God's nature. (2p45sch.)

With regard to the citation above, it is notable that in the very next proposition (2p46dem) Spinoza refers to God's eternal and infinite essence or power as 'common to all things, and equally in the part as in the whole'. Moreover in the following 2p47sch Spinoza actually refers to knowledge of the third kind. This, perhaps, gives some support to my reading that the role of intuition, when conceiving things under a form of eternity, is to conceive God's very essence or his power, which is involved and expressed in all things. In Spinoza's system, other finite things are involved when particular things are brought to exist in a certain manner (1p28). However, the power by which particular things come to exist and persist in their existence, cannot be attributed to other finite things, nor to their own individual nature (emphasis added):

> Therefore, just as their coming into existence cannot follow from their essence, so neither can their perseverance in existing. The same power that they need in order to begin to exist, they also need in order to continue to exist. Hence it follows that the power of natural things by which they exist, and consequently by which the act, can be no other than *the eternal power of God.* (TP2 S: 683.)

Particular things cannot be or be conceived without God. As argued modes are by definition 'in something else and are conceived through something else' (1def5). I argue that this *invisible* aspect of duration, this *very nature of existence* (2p45sch),[166] i.e. the continuous dependence of particular things on God's eternal and infinite

[166] I agree with Youpa's reading of 2p45sch that 'the very nature of existence is not duration, and it also suggests that the nature of existence has something to do with being dependent on the eternal necessity of God's nature' (2011: 314).

power to exist and to persist in their being is something common to all things and is intuited by knowledge of the third kind (5p36sch). This insight is not achieved by sense perception, nor it seems by reason. This most fundamental reality, i.e. the dependence of modes on God's eternal and infinite power is best experienced intuitively. In my view, the idea of essence monism is intuitive and belongs to knowledge of the third kind.

6.1.2. The intellect and the self

What does the intellectual way of conceiving things in the light of eternity, discussed above, have to do with Spinoza's theory of the mind's eternity? I argue that the property of the intellect, to conceive things under a form of eternity, says much about its own nature, which I argue is eternal. The method of discovering the nature of the intellect by considering its clear and distinct properties is based on the procedure found in the TdIE:

> The definition of the intellect will become self-evident if we attend to its properties that we do understand clearly and distinctly. (TdIE§107.)

As argued in the previous section, to perceive something in the light of eternity involves and expresses the adequate idea of God's essence. When we employ the idea of God's essence in order to perceive particular things adequately, we perceive them in the light of eternity, which is to conceive 'their efflux from eternity' (Ep12 S: 789). In this view, particular things are conceived as finite expressions of God's eternal and infinite essence. As Nadler puts it: When 'we understand things in this way, we see them from the infinite and eternal perspective of God, without any relation to or indication of time and place. When we perceive things in time, they appear in a continuous state of change and becoming; when we perceive them "under a form of eternity", what we apprehend abides permanently. This kind of knowledge, because it is atemporal and because it is basically God's knowledge, is eternal' (2001:121).

Now the fact that we are able to conceive things under a form of eternity, i.e. in the way that God perceives things, says much about the nature of the intellect. Spinoza clearly says that our intellect is a part of God's intellect (TdIE§73; 2p11cor).

In contrast to the intellect, the sensory ideas of the imagination do not reflect the way in which God (God's intellect) conceives things. These inadequate ideas are only in our minds and are extinguished when the body perishes:

> It is only while the body endures that the mind expresses the actual existence of its body and conceives the affections of the body as actual (2p8cor). Consequently (2p26), it does not conceive any body as actually existing save while its own body endures. Therefore (2p17sch), it cannot exercise either imagination or memory save while the body endures (see Def. of Memory in 2p18sch). (5p21dem.)

Now for Spinoza, the human intellect is eternally part of the infinite intellect of God. God's essence is the object or *ideatum* of his idea and seeing that the former is simple, the idea of God, which the intellect contains, will also be simple. In Spinoza, the human intellect has the idea of God innately and seeing that the idea of God is simple (the same in the part as in the whole), the idea of God in us must be complete and therefore adequate. Moreover, seeing that God's intellect is simple (by virtue of it containing God's idea) and therefore equal in the part as in the whole, a human intellect that is part of God's intellect must then also be equal to the whole and be the same as God's intellect and all other intellects, which are part of the infinite intellect. For Spinoza, God's intellect seems then to be constituted of infinite finite intellects, which are all eternal modes of thinking:

> … our mind, insofar as it understands, is an eternal mode of thinking which is determined by another eternal mode of thinking, and again this by another, and so on ad infinitum, with the result that they all together constitute the eternal and infinite intellect of God. (5p40sch.)

I argue that, in a sense, finite intellects and God's intellect are one and the same. Seeing that God's intellect is eternal, and our intellect is indiscerptibly part of God's intellect, the human intellect must then also be eternal. In my view this is the nub of the argument on which Spinoza's theory of the mind's eternity depends. As argued previously, the idea of God's essence, contained in the intellect, refers to the ideas of the active universal and fundamental natures, laws or principles of our universe by

which all things are created and sustained. These simple ideas are of God's power, the common ideas and notions of the attributes and the immediate infinite modes. The Idea of God (God's intellect) contains the ideas of the attributes and the common notions pertaining to each attribute. I claim then that the adequate ideas pertaining to God's essence are the same in God's intellect and in ours and in all others.[167] These ideas of God are eternal and so will these ideas in a human intellect be eternal.[168]

What is the implication of this view for the EIP? If the suggestion above, that our intellect and God's intellect are basically one and the same, it may seem that any notion of a human self is dissolved into a larger cosmic intellectual self and this outcome, would have serious consequences for the EIP, in my view. The importance of the notion of an individual self for Spinoza's EIP was discussed earlier. I argue that Spinoza realizes this and does employ the notion of the *self* quite strongly, especially in the second section of the fifth part of the *Ethics* (my emphasis):

> Therefore, our mind, insofar as it knows *itself* and the body under a form of eternity, necessarily has knowledge of God, and knows … etc. (5p30dem.)

> So the more each man is advanced in this kind of knowledge, the more clearly conscious he is of *himself* and of God. (5p31sch.)

> From this kind of knowledge there arises the highest possible contentment of mind (5p27), that is (Def. of emotions 25), the highest possible pleasure, and this is accompanied by the idea of *oneself*, and consequently (5p30) also by the idea of God as cause. (5p32dem.)

[167] God's absolutely infinite intellect would also contain ideas of other attributes and the immediate infinite modes pertaining to these attributes, which are unknown to us. In this sense our intellect would then differ from God's intellect. However, all attributes, even those unknown to us, must all express the very essence of God, i.e. his power. All intellects should then have the same idea of God's power and in this sense all intellects contain the idea of God's essence and, in this sense, are the same.

[168] Nadler (2001: ix) argues that the contextual background for the second section of part five of the *Ethics* should be sought in the tradition of the medieval Jewish philosophers, Maimonides and Gersonides. In the view of Gersonides, the highest form of knowledge represents the sum of a person's intellectual achievements in his earthly life and the ensuing eternity of the mind is the reward for achieving this highest form of virtue. Nadler argues that Spinoza's knowledge of the third kind is similar to the notion of the 'acquired intellect' in Gersonides. For the latter virtue is nothing but the pursuit of eternal truths and is all that remains after our death. For Nadler, Spinoza rejects the traditional claims about personal immortality as nothing but fictions and deems Spinoza's theory of the minds eternity to be very similar to that found in this tradition and as the culmination of a certain trend in Jewish rationalism (ibid.: 130,1).

The EIP, which is to attain the true idea of God and to conceive things in the light of eternity, requires the notion of a stable individual self. As Spinoza says in the citation above, 'our mind, insofar as it knows itself and the body under a form of eternity, necessarily has knowledge of God…' I argue that, for Spinoza, without the notion of an individual self we will not be able to know God adequately and to conceive things in the light of eternity. I have consistently argued that although the EIP is mainly concerned with developing an eternal perspective of the world, sense perception does have an important role to play. Without some sense of self, albeit partial, which arises from the sensory ideas of the individual nature of the body, the mind would not have an idea of itself and would have no notion of having and reflecting on its own ideas, which, as argued, is a notion crucial to the EIP.[169] Spinoza seems to have realized this quite early in his work (emphasis added):

> And so when it happens that the degrees of motion and rest are not equal, in all the parts of the body, but that some have more motion and rest than others, there arises therefrom a difference of feeling … And when it happens that the eternal causes, which bring about these changes, are different from one another, and have not all the same effect, then there results from this a difference of feeling in one and the same part … *Lastly, now that we have explained what feeling is, we can easily see how this gives rise to an Idea reflexiva, or the knowledge of oneself, Experience and Reasoning.* (STapp2 S: 106,7.)

I argue that the idea of the individual nature of the body, albeit based on experience and therefore rather unclear, is crucial for the intellect having an idea of *itself.*[170] I have argued earlier that in Spinoza's system it is not contradictory to conceive a mode as having distinct parts, albeit that this perception is superficial. To conceive God's intellect as made up of parts (selves) is allowed in Spinoza's system (Ep12). However, when conceived in the light of eternity, God's intellect is seen to be equal in the part as in the whole, i.e. as one and undivided.[171] However, although God's

[169] I am thankful to my supervisor, Olli Koistinen, for drawing my attention to this important matter.
[170] See also Mason's suggestion (1997: 241) that '…presumably the thought would be that the body is necessary at some time for identity, but not the continuing existence of the body.'
[171] The question if this view includes the idea an eternal self, which somehow continues to exist after the body perishes is unclear, but in my view is not completely ruled out. Spinoza seems to be thinking in this direction in 5p42sch. It is quite clear however, in my view, that the notion of an eternal self cannot contain anything personal. Koistinen (2009a: 169) makes 'room for individual immortality

intellect seems then to be constituted by infinite *individual* intellects, such eternal modes of thinking are without any personal memories.[172] Spinoza's theory of the mind's eternity does not, in my view, incorporate any notion of personal immortality.[173]

Lastly, although the infinite intellect is an eternal source of adequate ideas, it is so by virtue of it inhering directly and eternally in God. As argued earlier, the infinite intellect, of which our intellect is eternally part, is wholly dependent on God, without which it cannot be nor be conceived. As is the case with all modes in Spinoza's system, our intellect is never separated from God and cannot be completely autonomous. As Spinoza writes in the TTP:

> …our intellect and knowledge depend solely on the idea or our understanding of God, and spring from it and are perfected by it. (TTP4 S: 434.)

I argue in what follows that knowing our dependence on God is crucial in attaining the highest form of certainty in our ideas.

6.2. Certitude and God's concurrence

In my view, Spinoza sought certainty in knowledge through the adequate ideas of God's essence and the wellspring of such ideas is the innate idea of God, or which is the same, the intellect. It seems however that he and Descartes thought that most humans are largely unconscious of their innate ideas, hence the need for the emendation of the intellect. In Spinoza, the EIP is aimed at helping mankind

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which should strictly be kept apart from personal immortality which includes memory and imagination'.

[172] One wonders what such an individual intellect would do after the durational body perishes. Spinoza, according to Leibniz, employed some notion of the transmigration of minds in his theory of the mind's eternity (Klever 1996: 46). Leibniz noted the following, apparently after meeting with Tschirnhaus, where Spinoza's work was discussed: 'He (Spinoza) believes a sort of Pythagorical transmigration namely that minds go from body to body' (ibid.). According to Klever 'Tschirnhaus credits Spinoza – and this is completely new in comparison to other sources – with a kind of Pythagoreanism, implying that souls in a certain sense transmigrate from one form of matter to another. This idea is not entirely alien to the theory of the minds eternity, based on the adequate ideas of the 'fixed and eternal things' of extension.' I agree with Klever that this note of Leibniz is extremely valuable in that it enables us to see how Spinoza's doctrine was understood and explained by his friends and followers in and around 1675. See also 5p23sch for the notion of the mind having existed before the body.

[173] For Nadler (2001: 131), to 'believe that Spinoza's philosophy allows for personal immortality is deeply to misunderstand Spinoza.'

overcome the bondage of the mind to traditional credulous notions by becoming conscious of its own inner source of truth in the intellect. Becoming conscious of the intellect and its powers is a crucial aspect of the emendation of the intellect and in the pursuit of certitude:

> I shall embark upon the first and most important task, emending the intellect and rendering it apt for the understanding of things … so that I at the same time begin to know my powers and the nature which I desire to perfect. (TdIE§18.)

Although all finite minds necessarily have the idea of God (1p21dem), it seems that not all minds are conscious of this. As argued previously, this state of unawareness does not completely disable the power of the intellect. Even if humans are mostly unaware of the existence and nature of the intellect, they still necessarily employ their adequate ideas and it seems that thinking is not possible without the use of them. This refers, firstly, to the very essence of thought, namely affirmation, which is the essence of all ideas, even inadequate ones. Secondly, whenever we form an idea, we necessarily use the ideas of the attributes and the common notions to do so. The very fact that humans are able to form ideas and to think adequately to some degree indicates the continuous presence of the idea of God in our minds. Even though we do have confused and obscure ideas and think mostly imaginatively, our ideas of things are not completely inadequate. Even in our sensory ideas there is some positive and adequate affirmation of that which is common to all things. However, for Spinoza, we are mostly unaware of the indispensible role of God in our having ideas of things and in building a body of knowledge, albeit mostly inadequate.

In Spinoza's view, we have not achieved our highest perfection if we are not consciously aware of the presence of God's idea in us and understand its indispensible role in our ability to think adequately. Being conscious in this regard refers to becoming aware of the *dependence* of our minds on God's innate idea to form our ideas and to produce a body of adequate knowledge. As argued earlier, we understand the very nature of existence when we become aware of the dependence of all things, bodies and ideas, on God's power. In Spinoza the possibility of becoming more active and self-determined depends on unshackling our minds from the traditional notion that the human mind is deeply corrupt due to mankind's fall into sin. Furthermore, for Spinoza the achievement of the highest certainty in our knowledge also depends on

knowing with surety that our intellect is eternally part of God's intellect. I claim that, for Spinoza, complete certainty in our true ideas is not possible without the equal certitude that our minds are continuously in God, i.e., that the intellect can never be separated from its source of truth. It is this conviction that girds the certainty of our true ideas and enables us to apply our minds with confidence and to take positive action in our lives. In my view, Spinoza's theory of the eternity of the mind mainly serves the purpose of attaining epistemological certainty in this life and is not aimed at securing personal salvation.

Now the first step towards a greater consciousness of the intellect has do with becoming aware of the presence and role of the idea of God in our minds:

> Our mind, insofar as it knows itself and the body under a form of eternity, necessarily has knowledge of God, and knows that it is in God and is conceived through God. (5p30.)

In becoming aware that we are able to form true ideas of the essence of our body and mind under a form of eternity and understanding the significance thereof, leads to the realization that our mind is dependent on God, i.e. that it *is in God and conceived through God.* In becoming aware of our true and false ideas and understanding the difference between them and also what this signifies is the core of the method of improving the intellect. When we come to clearly understand the nature of our true ideas, the only explanation for us having them is by virtue of our mind being involved in God's intellect. What we should become conscious of is that the idea of God in us, is the formal or direct cause of our adequate ideas and all our knowledge:

> The third kind of knowledge depends on the mind as its formal cause insofar as the mind is eternal. (5p31.)

Now the more someone becomes aware of her adequate ideas the more she advances in the highest kind of knowledge and the more clearly conscious she is *of herself and of God* (5p31sch my emphasis). Becoming conscious in terms of the EIP includes, *both* an awareness of our self and also of God:

> From this kind of knowledge there arises the highest possible contentment of mind, that is, the highest possible pleasure, and this is accompanied by the idea of oneself, and consequently also by the idea of God as cause. (5p32dem.)

In Spinoza our certitude and ensuing joy cannot be grounded in the power of our intellect alone. The third kind of knowledge is consistently described by Spinoza as the *amor Dei intellectualis*, as an awareness of our mind's continuous dependence on God's thinking force:

> The true Understanding can never perish; for in itself it can have no cause to destroy itself … And as it did not emanate from external causes, but from God, so it is not susceptible to any change through them …And since God has produced it immediately and he is only an inner cause, it follows necessarily that it cannot perish so long as this cause of it remains … Now, this cause of it is eternal, therefore it is too. (ST2/26 S: 101.)

Human beings are modes of God's essence and are wholly dependent on him for everything. Certitude with regard to our adequate ideas is then eventually firmly grounded in God's concurrent essence, which continually sustains our minds. We have adequate and inadequate ideas only by virtue of these ideas necessarily involving and expressing God's eternal essence. By means of the innate idea of God, our minds are never separated from God's concurrent essence. The highest and most excellent way of knowing, the knowledge of the third kind, is therefore described in terms of love:

> The mind's love, must be related to the active nature of the mind and is therefore an activity whereby the mind regards itself, accompanied by the idea of God as cause…(5p36dem.)

Note in the above citation the two elements involved in reaching the highest form of knowledge. There is, firstly, an awareness of the activity of mind itself, which is accompanied by the idea of God as cause. Intuitive knowledge of the third kind is

then the certain awareness or consciousness of the fact that the intellect is continuously dependent on God for its essence and existence (5p36sch).[174]

As argued in the previous chapter, the role of intuition is to unite us with God and this happens best by means of the true ideas of the mind. Through the production of our own true ideas (such as the idea of a rotating semi circle) we become convinced of the divine nature of our minds or the continuous presence of God, through his idea in our minds. The realization that should eventually dawn on us is of our dependence on God to form all our ideas, even sensory one's. Once we become aware of the nature of the intellect and that our intellect is involved in God's intellect, we realize that we are directly united with God and that we are continuously dependent on him.[175] In 5p36 we read:

> Again, since the essence of our mind consists solely in knowledge, whose principle and basis is God, it follows that we see quite clearly how and in what way our mind, in respect of essence and existence, follows from the divine nature and is continuously dependent on God. I have thought this worth noting here in order to show by this example the superiority of that knowledge of particular things which I have called 'intuitive' or 'of the third kind,' and its preferability to that abstract knowledge which I have called 'knowledge of the second kind." The latter kind of knowledge is legitimate but it 'does not strike the mind as when it is inferred from the essence of each particular thing which we assert to be dependent on God.

I argue that what Spinoza, at bottom, seems to be doing in all of this is to bring God in as the eventual guarantor that our adequate ideas are certainly true, which is quite similar to Descartes (emphasis added):

> Now in order that we may conceive God's nature clearly and distinctly, we have to fix our attention on certain very simple axioms called universal axioms, and connect to them those attributes that belong to the divine nature. Only then

[174] In my view Spinoza does not suggest a mystical type union between our mind and that of God. Intuitive knowledge does include a feeling component, such as joy and contentment, but this follows from attaining certainty of our true ideas. This is an intellectual experience.
[175] The idea of concurrence is also very Cartesian and is an important theme in Descartes's third Meditation (DSPW: 96-98).

> does it become clear to us that God necessarily exists and is omnipresent, *and only then do we see that all our conceptions involve God's nature and are conceived through God's nature, and, finally, that everything that we adequately conceive is true.* (TTP S: 574.)

Spinoza adds to his theory of the eternity of the mind the notion that the mind can continue to progress in this highest level of knowledge and that we should strive towards increasing the eternal part of the mind by increasing our adequate ideas as far as we can:

> Therefore, the greater the number of things the mind knows by the second and third kinds of knowledge, the greater is the part of it that survives. (5p38.)

> Hence it follows that the part of the mind that survives, of whatever extent it may be is more perfect than the rest. (5p40.)

The general consensus in scholarship seems to be that when we decrease the number of inadequate ideas that we have in our minds, the greater will be the role played by the intellectual part. By increasing our adequate ideas the mind will also be less disturbed by the presence of inadequate ideas, which lead to the passions. I think what Spinoza could also have in mind is that we should become more generally proficient in the application of both reason and intuition in our everyday lives as well. Spinoza's EIP is not only aimed at producing knowledge that is highly philosophical in nature, but also at the improvement of society and in alleviating its many problems. The practical and social intention of the EIP is clearly included in his initial formulation of the task of emending the intellect:

> This, then, is the end for which I strive, to acquire the nature I have described and to endeavor that many should acquire it along with me. That is to say, my own happiness involves my making an effort to persuade many others to think as I do, so that their understanding and their desire should entirely accord with my understanding and my desire. To bring this about, it is necessary (1) to understand as much about Nature as suffices for acquiring such a nature, and (2) to establish such a social order as will enable as many as possible to reach this

> goal with the greatest possible ease and assurance. Furthermore, (3) attention must be paid to moral philosophy and likewise the theory of the educating of children; and since health is of no little importance in attaining this end, (4) the whole science of medicine must be elaborated. And since many difficult tasks are rendered easy by contrivance, and we can thereby gain much time and convenience in our daily lives, (5) the science of mechanics is in no way to be despised. (TdIE§14.)

In the TTP4 we read the following:

> To put it another way, since the knowledge of an effect through its cause is nothing other than the knowledge of a property of that cause, the greater our knowledge of natural phenomena, the more perfect is our knowledge of God's essence, which is the cause of all things. (S: 428.)

It is apparent from the above that, in Spinoza, the pursuit of adequate knowledge is not only aimed at discovering a personal inner sense of joy and happiness, although this seems to be the main objective. His EIP also reaches out to our practical wellbeing and that of human society. The task of the EIP is to adequately understand God's essence and all that follows from it and this also means, quite simply, that we should also aspire to have adequate knowledge of the natural world. I have consistently pointed out that the early modern pursuit of certainty was seen to be of extreme importance in providing a secure epistemological base for a new science and morality. The conviction that the intellect supplied a sure cognitive grasp of the essence of things was very important in the endeavor to improve society. Insofar as we are successful in the EIP we increase our adequate knowledge and reduce the negative influence of inadequate ideas. In this way our world can become more rational, which is also the aim of the EIP.[176]

[176] Israel discusses Spinoza's 'notable absence or marginality' from most histories of science and argues that Spinoza does indeed have a special place in the history of scientific thought. Spinoza's most important contribution is his insistence of the universal applicability of reason to all aspects of life, with no reserved area beyond it (2002: 242-246).

6.3. Spinoza's intellectual vision

In Spinoza, self-contentment is found in the true contentment of the mind, insofar as it understands clearly and distinctly, which activity is unchecked and therefore accompanied by the feeling of pleasure (5p18dem). His pursuit of adequate knowledge started out in the TdIE with the enquiry:

> … if there existed a true good, one which was capable of communicating itself and could alone effect the mind to the exclusion of all else, whether, in fact there was something whose discovery and acquisition would afford me a continuous and supreme joy to all eternity. (TdIE§1.)

Spinoza's task of emending the intellect sought to uncover our highest good:

> Thus he urged to seek the means that would bring him such a perfection, and all that can be the means of his attaining this objective is called a true good, while the supreme good is to arrive at the enjoyment of such a nature, together with other individuals, if possible. What that nature is we shall show in its proper place, the knowledge of the union which the mind has with the whole of Nature. (Ibid.§13.)

How would one summarize the end result of this endeavor? What does Spinoza's rationalist understanding or vision amount to? In the last paragraph of the appendix to part 4 of the *Ethics* Spinoza writes:

> But human power is very limited and is infinitely surpassed by the power of external causes, and so we do not have absolute power to adapt to our purposes things external to us. However, we shall patiently bear whatever happens to us that is contrary to what is required by consideration of our own advantage, if we are conscious that we have done our duty and that our power was not extensive enough for us to have avoided the said things, and that we are a part of the whole of Nature whose order we follow. If we clearly and distinctly understand this, that part of us which is defined by the understanding, that is, the better part of us, will be fully resigned and will endeavor to persevere in that resignation.

> For insofar as we understand, we can desire nothing but that which must be, nor, in an absolute sense, can we find contentment in anything but truth. And so insofar as we rightly understand these matters, the endeavor of the better part of us is in harmony with the order of the whole of Nature. (4app32.)

The above citation is an arresting summary of Spinoza's rationalist vision and the end goal of his EIP. [177] When we are united with God by means of having his true idea, we then also perceive things as God does and understand the very nature of existence. In my view the very heart of such a vision is the intuitive awareness of the total dependence of all things on God. The source of our self-contentment is to know with complete certainty that all things are contained in God, follow from God and are continuously sustained by him. This vision conceives things in the light of eternity and understands that everything is just as it should be and that all things are in perfect relation, harmony and union with one another. In Spinoza's words:

> The idea of God which is in us is adequate and perfect … there can be no pain accompanied by the idea of God … nobody can hate God. (5p18dem.)

> …the wise man, insofar as he is considered as such, suffers scarcely any disturbance of spirit, by virtue of a certain eternal necessity, of himself, of God and of things, never ceases to be, but always possesses true spiritual contentment. (5p42sch.)

[177] Spinoza's idea of salvation or blessedness has to do with 'the constant and eternal love toward God' (5p36sch). Salvation in Spinoza seems to apply only to minds that are fully conscious of the innate idea of God. As seen, Spinoza does not think this to be the case for all human beings. Spinoza says in TTP4 that 'carnal man cannot understand these things…he has too stunted a knowledge of God' (S: 428). In the final passages of the *Ethics* Spinoza says that the ignorant man perishes and 'ceases to be at all', but the wise man 'never ceases to be' (5p42sch). Becoming aware or conscious of the innate idea of God is possible for all humans, but not all achieve this. It is unclear to me if Spinoza employs a notion of salvation for humans as a reward of some sort for achieving the highest virtue, i.e. intellectual perfection and if such a reward comes after our death or if it is to be only enjoyed in this life. See also TTP14 where Spinoza includes the notion of being *saved* in his principles of a universal faith (S: 518). This is an interesting subject, which needs further investigation.

7. Conclusion

My undertaking in this work has been to clarify Spinoza's concept of emending the intellect, which is indeed a central theme of his philosophical work:

> Therefore it is of the first importance in life to perfect the intellect, or reason, as far as we can, and the highest happiness or blessedness for mankind consists in this alone. (4app4.)

His view, that our highest joy and happiness depends so crucially on the improvement of the intellect, has much to do with Spinoza's early modern view that our *human* nature is seated in the mind and specifically in our ability to think:

> Man thinks. (2ax2.)

> The essence of man (2p10cor) is constituted by definite modes of the attributes of God, to wit (2ax2), modes of thinking. (2p11dem.)

For Spinoza, human beings think, i.e., we naturally employ ideas in all that we do in our lives and this differentiates us from other things. Although all things are animate to a degree, only human beings think. This does not however mean that we always think adequately and that we naturally use reason aright. As seen, our supposed thinking nature is constituted by the intellect and the imagination, by both adequate and inadequate ideas and that the latter often gives rise to the passions, which underlie most of mankind's problems. In order then for us to become more self-determined it is most important to learn to follow reason's true ideas. Spinoza's philosophy has a clear ethical intention, to secure an incorruptible source of joy and happiness. I have contended that such bliss is only to be found in our highest form of self-action, which is to live in accordance with the adequate ideas formed by the intellect:

> For the eternal part of the mind (5p23 and 29) is the intellect, through which alone we are said to be active (3p3), whereas that part which we have shown to perish is the imagination (5p21), through which alone we are said to be passive. (5p40cor.)

I have argued for a close association between Spinoza's EIP and the early modern quest for certitude, i.e., the search for an incontrovertible epistemological foundation that could form the basis for progress in science and the improvement of society. However, although Spinoza most certainly participated in this project, he did not envisage the transformation of society as the main purpose of his work. The main focus of his EIP is rather on discovering true peace of mind and not the establishing of a rational society. Spinoza's primary focus is philosophical or epistemological and not political and economical. In his view, eternal joy and happiness could not arise from a new political or social dispensation or in the attainment of material things. A most crucial insight in the process of emending the intellect is that, for Spinoza, the world is actually perfect as it is. Our understanding of the world is however mostly misguided and this is the root cause of our discontent. His main endeavor then is for us to discover joy and self-contentment in the world as it is and always will be. His philosophy aims primarily at uncovering and understanding the true idea of the inmost essence of things, which leads to the contentment of the mind. For Spinoza, this is only possible for rational man and not for those who pursue a sensual life, i.e. carnal man:

> For this truth is told us by the idea of God, that God is our supreme good, i.e., that the knowledge and love of God is the final end to which all our actions should be directed. But carnal man cannot understand these things; he thinks them foolish because he has too stunted a knowledge of God, and in this supreme good, it does only in philosophic thinking and pure activity of mind, he finds nothing to touch, to eat, or to feed the fleshy appetites which are his chief delight. But those who recognize that they have no more precious gift than intellect and a sound mind are sure to regard these as very substantial blessings. (TTP4 S: 428.)

I have argued that the adequate conceivability of God's very essence is absolutely crucial for Spinoza's EIP:

> Now to perfect the intellect is also nothing other than to understand God and the attributes and actions of God that follow from the necessity of his nature. (4app4.)

It is by clearly and distinctly understanding the inmost essence of our world, that the wise man finds peace with God, himself and the world. Ignorant man, however, who passively follows his inadequate ideas, is always discontent and at odds with God, himself and other things (5p42sch). As argued, the most important intellectual insight that grounds this *acquiescentia in se ipso* is to grasp the very nature of existence; that all things are contained in God, follow from him and are totally dependent on his very essence or power (2p45sch). This is the intellectual vision of things *sub specie aeternitatis*, i.e. to perceive things in the light of eternity as God does. When we perceive God, ourselves and all other things as contained in God in this way, we necessarily discover peace of mind and joy:

> The idea of God which is in us is adequate and perfect (2p46 and 47). Therefore, insofar as we contemplate God, we are active (2p3). Consequently (3p59), there can be no pain accompanied by the idea of God; that is, nobody can hate God. (5p18dem.)

As argued, the EIP is however a continuous struggle. We are very weak and are easily overpowered by external forces (4app32). We often succumb to inadequate imaginary ideas, which fuel the negative passions. Such inadequate ideas easily develop into powerful ideologies that hold sway over us and are very difficult to break away from. For Spinoza such powerful and often conflicting ideologies and religions are the main cause of the endless human conflict. It is apparent that Spinoza did not think it possible to overturn all of this and to rid the world of imaginary thinking. In fact, such an idea would be out of place in his fundamental notion of substance monism. As said, all is contained and follows from God's very essence and nothing can ever be in contradiction to God's essence - seeing that all things have the natural right to strive to further their existence as best they can. What can and should be improved is our understanding of the inmost essence of our world. However, as argued, for Spinoza this highest epistemological certitude is eventually achieved intuitively. This highest form of knowledge is however difficult and elusive (1p15sch). Spinoza's task has

mostly to do with *philosophic thinking and pure activity of mind* and does not primarily aim to bring about political or economic change. His EIP aims to transform our *understanding* of things, if we are able and willing to undertake the challenging task of improving our intellect.

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